THE PERAMBULATOR IN EDINBURGH

by

JAMES BONE

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THE PERAMBULATOR IN EDINBURGH

By the Same Author

THE LONDON PERAMBULATOR

AN EDINBURGH VIEW

JAMES BONE

THE PERAMBULATOR IN EDINBURGH

'He would have me to perambulate
(a word quite in his own stile)'
Johnson's advice to Boswell, retailed
in Boswell's letter to Sir
David Dalrymple
16 *July* 1763

★

With pictures by

E. S. LUMSDEN

A.R.S.A.

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To
A. M. B.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I	THE FACE OF EDINBURGH	15
II	EDINBURGH WINDOWS	63
III	INTERIORS WITH FIGURES	69
IV	GRACE O' LIFE	95
V	GHOSTS	101
VI	THE PENNY PLAIN WITH A TINT	115
VII	AN HISTORICAL CHARACTER	119
VIII	SATURDAY AFTERNOONS	131
IX	A GLIMPSE	139
X	THE MODERN ATHENIAN	145
XI	THE MERCIES OF EDINBURGH	171

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	Frontispiece
AN EDINBURGH VIEW	*Facing page*
THE ROYAL MILE	22
THE REGISTER	36
THE BANKS	46
THE SAUT-BUCKETS	56
THE OLD TOWN RIDGE	66
UPPER GREENSIDE LANE	74
A ROOM IN BRODIE'S CLOSE	82
CANONGATE CHURCH	100
THE BACKS OF LEITH STREET	114
THE CASTLE IN SNOW	118
A BONFIRE IN CRAIG'S CLOSE	130
HOLYROOD HOUSE	138
THE UNIVERSITY DOME	154
ST. JOHN STREET OFF THE CANONGATE	164
CHARLOTTE SQUARE	174

PREFACE

THIS BOOK, WHICH HAS NOW UNDERGONE CONSIDERABLE changes and additions, was published, in its original form, with illustrations by Mr. Hanslip Fletcher, in 1911, under the title *Edinburgh Revisited*. With these enlargements, Mr. Lumsden's illustrations and a new title, it ventures again before the public. Remembering R. L. Stevenson, Alexander Smith and Chambers, and in recent years the works of Mr. John Geddie, Miss Rosaline Masson, Mr. Francis Watts and others, the writer was aware of the audacity of launching another book about Edinburgh. His reason for hoping that he had not added a volume to the Superfluous Book Library was that, during his extensive explorations through the interiors of the Old Town *lands*, he acquired some idea what elegance and harmony really remain in the homes built for the Edinburgh gentry and now tenanted by the very poor; and of the attitude of the tenants towards these relics – a side of Edinburgh study which so far as he knows has not been dealt with except in a few references in architectural books and in reports of Edinburgh's many charitable societies. He has also attempted to express the beauty and charm of the New Town of the Adams, Hamilton and Playfair. Revisiting the *lands* in 1926 the writer found comparatively little change in these interiors and none in the kindness of the tenants towards his intrusions.

It is said that we may foretaste posterity in the judgment of our foreign critics; as a Glasgow man (and so detached and alien) the writer ventured to associate his opinions of Edinburgh with those of posterity. The book was received with some acceptance

by the critics but without delight in the two great Scottish cities: in Glasgow because it was about Edinburgh; in Edinburgh because it was by a Glasgow man. The author, looking upon his long London residence, registered, so to speak, by a book on London, now addresses himself again to his countrymen and the wider public in the mask of a Londoner.

JAMES BONE

CHAPTER I

THE FACE OF EDINBURGH

I

EDINBURGH IS A CITY FROM WHICH YOU LOOK DOWN ON distant lighthouses and out on green bare hills. Her houses are built of a hard grey stone cut at her doors with barely a front of brick or painted plaster to break her rocklike monotony; so that in a distant first impression you are reminded less of man's handiwork than of a re-arrangement of Nature. Natural images crowd in the mind as one remembers Edinburgh. Most of her roads rush headlong downhill like salmon rivers. To the east her choppy waves of tenements surge out to the hills to recoil, in the backwash of St. Leonard's cottages and sheds, from the face of Salisbury Crags; and to the nor'-east she throws a long grey wave of terrace round Calton Hill, and leaves a jetsam of grey monuments on the summit.

Walking along Princes Street, you see the gay tulip parterres on the garden ridge set against the plum bloom which the valley yields to the wrinkled face of the great Castle rock, that piles itself up to the clouds as from a glen in Skye instead of in the main street of a capital city engraved by tramway cars. As you look up to the Castle, all you see on the long neck between the Old Town houses and the Castle port are a few small trees and a spiky monument or two; although you know that there are acres of houses beyond, you do not see a chimney, and the Castle and its approach seem as isolated as if the open country lay on the far side. Farther west again, there advance the distant woods of Corstorphine, like Macduff's army marching on the Castle, reminding you by their mass of foliage that a poverty of trees is

a characteristic of the city that contributes to its general impression of clean, wind-swept austerity.

Then, if you turn away to stir your limbs against the northern cold, you are made aware of another of Edinburgh's characteristics – the great skies that are always in your sight. To take leave from a friend who walks north from Princes Street is to see him impressively walking straight into the clouds, and to come up any of the northern streets is to find the Castle and the Old Town high before you in the sky. 'Princes Street is only hauf a street,' as another Glasgow critic well said, but he might have said it too of Queen Street and of many another. Wide gardens with small trees and the great sky bending overhead is the burden of an impression you receive again and again with added pleasure. Nor is it long before you succumb to the singular fascination lent to all this spaciousness of the New Town by the contrasting gaunt perpendicular Gothic of the old.

Wandering there among the close-set labyrinth of that stony forest one arrives at many view-points, but best of all are those of the Castle walls. Below you lies Auld Reekie, blackened and dried, an immortal herring, 'smeeked' for hundreds of years and cured in the sun till – one may add for those who remember their Smollett – all or nearly all her famous savours have been carried away on the airs of heaven. To the north you behold the whole fall of the country behind the green dome and the spires and chimneys of the New Town; the land spreading out in this Pisgah sight, rich with fields, mansions, avenues, harbours and ships, the dark floor of the Firth, the Fife villages smoking on their plains – a distant Kingdom indeed – and the eye draws up to the fastnesses of the Ochil and the Lomond Hills and the blue

pyramid of Largo Law. Sometimes in the cold spring days, when the land lies grey before you, a pale light suddenly spreads like a meaning over the prospect, and distant spires and glinting roofs raise their heads, and then as quickly sink back into the universal greyness, and all you reap for your watching is that a shower begins to break over Kirkcaldy, and that they are stepping new masts (they shine vividly) on that barque at Leith. He is king for a day who sits thus on his Castle Wall and surveys this wide champaign below. Not only from the Castle, but from many an office and study window you may enjoy these great views. In no other city in the kingdom can a man sit thus at his affairs and catch Nature busy at her processes over so vast a panorama. When rainbows arch him he sees clearly in whose field they have their ending, and can determine whose by right are their pots of gold.

Hence, a visit after a long absence is one of the purest joys of this delectable world. It is good to walk again the romantic untroubled streets, to pause on the Old Town ridge among its towering, aged *lands* of rough stone, and behold through dark and furtive closes faerie visions of the Forth lying below, cold and shining, and beyond it the pale hills of Fife. Edinburgh, as it were, goes to one's head, so crowded, vivid and sounding are the impressions she breaks about her. A flag is your only simile: like a flag the city cuts clean and brave against the clouds, fluttering (over often) in the shake of the east wind. She is a thing of history, worn and stained with old deeds and great days, starred with burning names. Like a flag the sight of her makes the blood move at a quick-step.

Macaulay thought the most beautiful cities in Europe were

Oxford, Edinburgh, and Genoa, in the order given. Oxford has a happy, inconspicuous site, and Genoa is a Gadarene city rushing into the sea – not enthroned on triple hills like Edinburgh. Luxembourg is a handsome town with a king's palace set on a steep hill, but her pretty streets lack Edinburgh's grimness and grand scale, and she is far from the sea. Budapest has a precipitate old city and a new one across the valley and the advantage of a fine river between, but it has no green hills like Arthur's Seat to which her citizens can lift their eyes. Paris is a famous beauty of the world (also with a one-sided street and a steep hill), grand in her ordered spaciousness and fine in her architecture, but she has no sea view and she does not go galloping like Edinburgh into the clouds, while flat grandiose Washington, with her vast inhuman scale and cloud of trees, was surely designed for the discomfiture of pigmy man. But Rome? – yes, even an Edinburgh Writer to the Signet must doff his tall hat to the Muckle City that Sitteth on Seven Hills, for Rome, besides her wonders, is shapely as well as eternal. Bath has hills, and her squares and terraces are of the same seemly order as Edinburgh's best, but she is set in the saucer of her hills. William Cobbett had thought that Bristol 'taking in its heights, and Clifton with its rocks and river, was the finest city in the world, but it is nothing to Edinburgh, with its Castle, its hills, its pretty little seaport detached from it, its vale of rich land lying all around, its lofty hills in the background, and its view across the Firth.' He added, 'I think little of its streets and its rows of fine houses, though all built of stone, and though everything in London and Bath is beggary to these . . . I was not disappointed, for I expected to find Edinburgh the finest city in the King-

dom.' And one should add to this anthology the shrewd opinion of the rotund author of *Modern Athens* (he is writing in 1829): 'It is one of the few large collections of the works of man in full accordance with the scene around, and its situation may be supposed to have been selected with a happy prescience of what art would add and age accumulate.'

Since the beginning of New Edinburgh at the end of the eighteenth century every extension has meant a new point whence the people could admire their craggy old city, and such is the dramatic nature of the site that the new parts, however commonplace they might be in themselves, could not altogether fail to cut a picturesque figure in the view from the centre. From the Old Town, from the New Town of Craig's plan, and from the Newer Edinburgh that spreads to the Braid Hills and round Corstorphine, the face of Edinburgh is astonishingly fair. Near or far it is the same. In the end you come back to the salient combination that distinguished 'high Dunedin' from all but a few great cities in the world – you can see it, and it is worth seeing.

To conclude, there is the one comparison that no writer on Edinburgh can afford to omit.

Travellers have generally agreed that Edinburgh has a strong resemblance to Athens, and the inhabitants have apparently been willing to humour them by planting happy adaptations and variations of Athenian buildings on prominent places and cutting down tall trees. Thus some see the Royal High School on Calton Hill as the Temple of Theseus; Dugald Stewart the philosopher and Robert Burns the poet are both commemorated by adaptations of the choragic monument to Lysicrates; the

observatory on Calton Hill is the Temple of the Winds. Most pointed of all the resemblances, there stands on the top of Calton Hill the Parthenon itself, reduced presumably by the onslaught of the Scots weather to a peristyle. But Nature's reproductions are even more convincing. From the spur of the Pentlands immediately above Colinton the resemblance of the view to that from the bottom of Mount Anchesmus is said to be undeniable. Bulessus is the Hill of Braid; the Castle Hill is the Acropolis; Lycabettus joined to Areopagus form the Calton Hill; and the Firth of Forth is the Ægean Sea. Inchkeith is, of course, Ægina, and the hills of the Peloponnesus rise in Fife.

Photography – although it has not yet confirmed William Blake's discovery that Islington is like the New Jerusalem – has confirmed the story of the old travellers: Edinburgh is like Athens. But, after all, as the east wind often reminds one, the likeness does not hold very far, though the face of Edinburgh is none the less fair for that. Her complexion at any rate is her own, changing with her changeful weather: the moist atmosphere giving tenderness and bloom; the sunshine after rain bringing out a hundred delicacies from her stone; the *haar* weaving veils of mysteries wherein the sunset, if it breaks through, turns all the city amethyst. One of the most singular of her beauties can be seen any night in Princes Street when the clouds have cleared after a day of galloping rain-bursts. The lights of the Old Town and the dark buildings, the glimmering pavement, the very stones of the streets have an extraordinary definition and brilliance; one is immediately aware of a curious exhilarating difference in the look of things. It is as though the window of Edinburgh had been cleaned.

And since we have raised the weather it may be as well to deal with it through the mouth of others. A minister of the Gospel from the West Coast identified Edinburgh as an 'east-windy, west-endy city.' James Payn, who settled there in 1858 as editor of *Chambers's Journal*, made as much ado about its east wind as he did about the Edinburgh Sunday. In vain Robert Chambers assured him that the same isothermal band passed through Edinburgh and London.

'I know nothing about isothermal bands,' was Payn's reply, 'but I know that I never saw a four-wheeled cab blown upside down in London.'

And perhaps it is as well to leave the Edinburgh weather at that.

II

Sanguine strangers, travelling from London by the East Coast Route past the great fabrics of Peterborough and York and Durham, have hoped to find the chain of cathedrals culminating in a mightier Durham on Edinburgh Hill. After these grand works of the Middle Ages, the building whose open crown tower just succeeds in appearing over the jostling tenements may seem hopelessly inadequate to the ancient capital of a famous country and may provoke remarks about John Knox and the misplaced zeal of a so-called Reformation. But St. Giles to-day is larger than it has ever been, and the beautiful addition of the Chapel of the Thistle shows that it has not yet ended its growth. Sir Robert Lorimer's building, moreover, shows, what is rarely seen elsewhere, that a modern addition to an ancient cathedral may even be an ornament to it. The original stone building

probably belonged to about the same period as Durham, but it was a small church, consisting, according to Wilson, of a nave and chancel united by a rich Norman chancel arch, which together occupied only a portion of the centre of the present nave. By the fire and fury of England, the 'auld enemie,' the piety of private donors and the zeal of its clergy to adapt the fabric to the needs of the growing city, the original building disappeared piece by piece until in the eighteenth century the only valuable Norman fragment was the North door, which a contemporary print shows to have been a remarkable piece of work, deeply recessed with rough carvings of animals, birds, zigzags and foliation. At the end of the century some one in authority discovered that if it were pulled down it would save the cost of repair – and the cost of repair was speedily saved. As it stands to-day the exterior suggests a modern building, but the interior presents a dignified aspect of fourteenth and fifteenth century Gothic. St. Giles did not become a cathedral till Charles II sought to establish Episcopacy. All through Catholic times it was in the metropolitan see of St. Andrews. There is evidence of its existence as a parish church in the thirteenth century. James III made it a collegiate church in 1466.

It must, indeed, be frankly admitted that the claims of Edinburgh do not lie in her ancient architecture. Scotland unhappily is one of the minor countries in a roll-call of the mediæval architecture of Europe. Except Glasgow Cathedral, particularly its crypt, there is nothing that cannot be excelled elsewhere, and there are only a few small churches and some fragments of greater fabrics that the authorities will admit to the second rank. This poverty was part of the price that Scotland paid for her

THE ROYAL MILE

independence in the face of her larger and wealthier neighbour. For centuries civil life was at the mercy of turbulent barons and weak kings, and after Bannockburn the Scots took their architecture intermittently from the Continent instead of through England. Isolated as part of an island from the chief stream of European culture, Scotland was still further cut off from the natural channel for civilization through being the end of the island farthest from the Continent. Her architecture is consequently full of interesting anachronisms and curiosities, a massiveness of treatment being given even to the French flamboyant, and the circular archway being used through the Middle Ages with the detail of the period. Edinburgh's Cathedral is wonderful for its age in the sense that a building so late in date should be so simple and dignified. If the General Assembly had the choosing of it now, they could hardly have thought of a style more fitting and helpful to the sentiment of Presbyterian worship.

Holyrood Chapel is a picturesque ruin of various dates with some very interesting features, notably the sculptured arcade and heads on the west front of the tower. The little chapel in the Cowgate, rebuilt in the regency of Mary of Guise, whose arms remain within a laurel wreath on one of the very few pieces of ancient glass that escaped the hurricane of the Reformation, is of antiquarian rather than of architectural interest. The tiny Oratory of St. Margaret in the Castle is the only piece of Norman work in Edinburgh, but its interest is mainly sentimental. Holyrood Palace has a small wing of fifteenth-century work which dictated the form of the frontage when the rest was rebuilt in Charles II's reign for the residence of his

brother. Its interior court is a thin and tentative design in what may be termed Renaissance in vernacular. George Heriot's Hospital, built in Charles I's reign, demands much more attention, although the old story that its designer was Inigo Jones has nothing to support it. The beautiful board-room is decorated by fine carvings, quite probably by Grinling Gibbons. The great hall of the Castle, although largely a restoration, has a fine roof and other features, and the Hall of the Parliament House, built about the same period as Heriot's Hospital, has handsome proportions and a fine hammer-beam roof. Canongate Tolbooth is a seemly memorial of the 'auld alliance' with France; Moray House with its deeply-corbelled balcony and fine coved ceilings, Tailor's Hall in the Cowgate, the quaintly dreary Canongate Church, and Greyfriars, with its face like a tombstone, almost exhaust the list. Compared with Durham, or Rouen, or Lucca, or Trèves, or Cologne, Edinburgh as a treasure-house of ancient architecture can hardly be said to exist.

Yet despite the loss of its ports and the destruction done by the hammer of the Reformation, the mediæval effect of Edinburgh is perhaps stronger than that of any of these cities. Even now the Old Town, in Defoe's words, 'presents the effect of one vast castle.' The tall, close-set buildings on the height, pinnacled, towered and peak-gabled, and the bold castle at the top rising so sharply from the green valley, still give the idea of a city on guard against wild enemies. The valley gardens that separate the New Town from the Old contribute enormously to the æsthetic content of the city. They allow you to stand back as from a picture, and give the memory time to colour the impres-

sion with thoughts of mediæval towns in illuminated missals and artists' ideal pictures of the towns of chivalry. Castle walls and turreted massive buildings rising from a green slope – what more can Dr. Syntax ask? Only one thing – a mighty river. We shall see that Edinburgh did what she could – much more than would seem possible – with the little Water of Leith, as though to atone for draining the Nor' Loch, that lay in the shadow of the Castle where the railway now runs. It was the mirror for Old Edinburgh's beauty into which through the years she gazed, like the Lady of Shalott, until she was half sick of herself and the sun. And so at last she destroyed her mirror and left her high bower and passed over to a fair new Camelot.

Although the Old Town is usually mentioned with a sigh for what once it was, the pilgrim will find when he walks the old streets that its aspect from across the valley is not an unfaithful index to the interior. A good deal has gone, and the lovers of the Old Town do right to mourn the losses and protest against the new attempts of those who cannot even understand that antiquity nowadays pays its own way in the hard cash of visitors and the trade that they bring. But much that is ancient remains. Mr. Bruce Home calculated that almost a hundred old *lands* and houses survive in the two thoroughfares between the Castle and Holyrood and in the Grassmarket, while some unidentified portions of old buildings exist under modern masks. It is indeed a matter for wonder that so much has been preserved through the ages; when the long-neglected scheme of city reform was at last begun, the reformers, finding themselves free to make a clearance of the horrors and squalors of the Old Town, took little thought of what they swept away. Since then the

citizens, who love their old city and understand the magnitude of their trust, have organized themselves to withstand the unthinking and even malicious efforts of the new destroyers who, with far less excuse than the old, seek to do greater damage. The buildings that front us to-day are the more precious because they seem to be the survivors after the grand attack, and one survivor after a battle is worth all the slain.

Within the last twenty years light has been let into many silent old places, where the wildest wind raging in the high chimney-tops hardly stirred the dead papers on the ground. Some closes in the High Street, which were so narrow when they were new that men fighting in them could not swing a sword, and fought with the point of a dagger, or, if they were Highlanders, with the *skean-dhu* that they carried in their garters, have gone at last. In Mr. Home's faithful and loving drawings their swart beauty and rocky strangeness are happily preserved. Gone, too, is the dark descending close that opened opposite the Tron Kirk, and took you by sharp stages into a teeming butcher's market, full of dark figures and dancing shadows among the coloured meats. Gone the cranky old shop that was once the home of Allan Ramsay, the barber-poet, and was a barber's shop again when I leaned one Hogmanay night on its outside wooden gallery and watched the white grimacing faces of the crowds under the dark *lands*. But in the Lawnmarket and the High Street and the Canongate long stretches of the ancient wall of buildings are intact. If there are fewer coats of arms and emblems and mottoes carved over the doors in the Old Town – I remember some in the Canongate that seemed like cries of supplication to the Lord as from a city in plague –

there are yet in the old rooms themselves handsome signs that men and women of degree lived and loved and perhaps danced minuets under guttering sconces, and at a pause, when the musicians tuned their fiddles, turned white shoulders and towering powdered heads to those black-barred windows to meet the night wind blowing saltly from the Forth. The contrast between the past grandeurs and present squalor in Edinburgh's ancient *lands* has furnished many a fine piece of moralizing, but the inch-thick grilles that remain in some of the windows to guard the ancient mansion, where poverty now hives in all its meanness, have still irony for the passer-by. Farther down the Canongate one's thoughts take a warmer colour at the sight of that squat, crabbed little mass of twisted stone where Queen Mary, they say, bathed in wine. There it stands, apart and preserved, as one might keep a battered shell because it had once contained a lustrous pearl.

According to some wise men of the West, Edinburgh is the place that Glasgow folk deserve, but there is surely something to be said for a people who keep unspoilt at their doors those astounding pieces of wild nature, Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags. These strange open heights and green spaces give Edinburgh its rarest effect. You pass down the Canongate, with its tall *lands* and mansions crammed with uneasy life, and suddenly the street grows wider and a few lower buildings like ancient hostelries bring you to the Palace, where kilted sentinels pace to and fro. Then past the shelter of its walls and out into open naked country without a house in sight, and nothing, as it seems, between you and the dangers of the night but your own right arm. It must have been so in the days of the Jameses.

The traveller issuing from the protecting city at nightfall, as you have done, must here have paused a little, as the gates clanged behind him, to look up at the unchanged hill and the dark empty country, and to see that his weapons were clear before starting his horse at a trot. There are cities that retain more of their ancient substance than Edinburgh, but only Edinburgh can give you so intimate a mediæval sensation as this.

The battle has gone hard against ancient buildings in other Scots towns. Glasgow has only one piece of domestic architecture older than the eighteenth century, and Ayr perhaps three; except Stirling, there is hardly a town in Scotland that can show half a dozen. Discriminating Edinburgh people may well feel pride that so much of their Old Town remains to them, but with all admiration for their efforts they could have done little to stay the destruction had it not been for one thing. The Old Town was preserved from the modern destroyer, as she was so often saved from her older enemies, by virtue of her precipitous position. The main enemies of antiquity in the High Streets of our old cities are tramway cars. When these appear in the old half-deserted thoroughfares, they draw the neighbourhood immediately, and old buildings are pulled down to make way for shops on the modern scale. Almost the last of the George III houses in Princes Street is gone, but the Canongate has still a great mansion of Queen Mary's time, and another in which Cromwell stayed, and John Knox's House, and many another ancient building. A great part of the old-world look of the Canongate and Lawnmarket and Cowgate comes from the small scale of the shops. One still comes on high-set, gently-curved shop windows with small panes of glass and arched wood-

work, into which Scott as a boy may have peered. Where windows of the modern size have been inserted, the *land* loses half its height. And the historic High Street itself, which, according to the urbane Captain Topham, in the eighteenth century far surpassed the Rue Royale at Lisle (then said to be the finest street in Europe), is too steep and its continuation too crooked for car traffic – even if car traffic could lead anywhere, which it cannot, since the Castle blocks one end and Holyrood the other.

It seems, indeed, as if the most dangerous period had passed, and the Old Town had survived the unsympathetic generations. The salvage work done in the face of many difficulties by such practical enthusiasts as the Cockburn Association, Mr. Patrick Geddes and other discriminating lovers of the Old Town is extraordinary, not only in repairing ancient buildings and making students' settlements of them – a true Back to the *Lands* Movement – but also in awakening people to the idea of the Old Town's regeneration. Lady Stair's House has been preserved by Lord Rosebery. Mowbray House enjoys the safety of John Knox's House, its neighbour, and so the most richly picturesque corner of the Old Town is guaranteed to posterity. There can surely be little fear now of the fate of Moray House, or the Tailor's Hall, or of White Horse Close, where the Scots lords, assembling on their way to join King Charles at Berwick, encountered the Presbyterian mob which had gathered to oppose them, so that to all save Montrose, who broke through, the affair was 'the Stoppit Stravaig.'

The Earl of Huntly's Speaking House in the Canongate, whose three plaster gables you can see from the Regent Road, and the Charles I House on Castle Hill, are now in safe-keep-

ing. For never has there been a time when those to whom historical and picturesque things are meaningless have been more willing to listen to the arguments of others who care for these matters. And yet, rally as the best in Edinburgh may to the banner of antiquity, when the gong of the tramway car clangs down the High Street, by that token we shall know that the knell of the Old Town has sounded at last.

Enough of Old Edinburgh happily survives to-day to make us realize its picturesqueness and puzzle over its manner of life in former times. The smallness of the city in which, in the middle of the eighteenth century, a multitude of human beings were cooped, is one of your strongest impressions, and although the fifteen-storey buildings in Parliament Close are all gone, many high-piled rookeries remain to afford explanations. '*Sic itur ad astra*,' the motto on the Canongate Tolbooth, might have been written on every entry. Much has been written about the Old Town's picturesque life, when learning, beauty, rank and wit touched shoulders on the stair with poverty and crime and incredible coarseness. But the habits of its modern tenants, and even the revival of the flat system in other towns, can give us little help in realizing what life must have meant in Old Edinburgh under the earlier conditions, and, as one burrows into the literature and history and law reports of the time, the matter for wonder lies not only in the unparalleled intimacy of the town's life, but in the secrecy that seems to have existed along with it. And wonder rises to a monumental height when we remember the case of the famous Deacon Brodie, Town Councillor and Deacon of the Wrights by day and tavern sharper, ruffler and burglar by night.

Think of the narrowness of the stage on which he played his uncanny part. He lived respectably with his sister in a house (now destroyed) at the foot of a close that falls off the Lawnmarket on the south side. The entry through which he sallied by day as a worthy and rather dandified town councillor, and by night in a grey coat with pistols in his belt and a mask in his pocket, still stands dark and enigmatic enough in all conscience for the name it bears – Brodie's Close. Much of his time he spent in Clark's Tavern in Fleshmarket Close, a house which, according to one authority, may possibly survive in the remnant of the old close that runs between High Street and Cockburn Street. And the Tavern, by all evidence at the trial, was as disreputable as the worst sharpers and blackguards in Edinburgh could make it. The Edinburgh citizen of that day was none too particular where he drank, but Clark's Tavern seems to have been like a boozing ken in Seven Dials. It was not here that the Deacon met his daytime acquaintances, and yet his reputation must have been in jeopardy every time he came and went. He had two mistresses, each of whom was presumably unaware of the other's existence. The one, Anne Grant, a letter to whom, written after his escape from Scotland, was the cause of his capture, lived in Cant's Close and had borne him three children, the oldest of whom was fourteen at the time of his trial. The other, Jean Watt, who had two children by him, and attempted to prove an alibi for him at the trial, lived in Liberton's Wynd. His chief associate, Smith, had a grocer's shop in the Cowgate, where on the night of the fatal attack on the Excise Office in Chessel's Court he burst in upon his anxiously waiting friends in a merry mood, pistol in hand,

and singing a stave ('Let us take the Road!') from the *Beggar's Opera*. The position of this shop in the Cowgate is not given. The iron crowbar, curling-tongs and false key were hidden after the burglary in a hole in Allan's Close. Let us see where these places are.

From the Deacon's house, with its panel painting of 'The Adoration of the Wise Men,' to the Lawnmarket entry to the Close would be less than a hundred yards; from there to the head of Fleshmarket Close is about three hundred yards. Liberton's Wynd was in the Lawnmarket, almost at his own door. Cant's Close can be seen on the High Street past Niddry Street, say a hundred yards from Fleshmarket Close. Allan's Close (one of the most gauntly impressive things in Edinburgh) is nearly opposite the Market Cross. Smith's house in the Cowgate was stated at the trial to be a few minutes' walk from Brodie's house. The whole itinerary can be made in twenty minutes. That a career of such wild duplicity as Brodie's could be carried on so long without detection suggests a field with vast distances and unrelated districts, like London (where in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* the Brodie idea was ultimately given a higher life) or even a part of London like Battersea or Pimlico. But in Old Edinburgh, where more than half the people were known to one another by headmark and nickname, it is difficult to bring these facts in line with one's grasp of reality. His whole campaign had no larger field than Lincoln's Inn in London, or Gordon Street, Glasgow, with a piece of St. Vincent Street of the same length.

To many a visitor who has prepared himself by reading to find in Edinburgh the scene of innumerable incidents in history and

romance and to people the old streets with a multitude of phantoms, one of the sharpest sensations of his visit is this smallness of the Old Town. Its limited scale, which deepens the mystery of Deacon Brodie, deepens yet further the darkness that still surrounds the extraordinary outbreak of the Porteous Riot, which rose suddenly by beat of drum in the Grassmarket, did what it had come to do and nothing else, then vanished into the night as suddenly as it had come. The rioters brought water-buckets to extinguish the fire after they had burnt down the Tolbooth door, and a guinea to pay for a halter in West Bow; they disarmed the Town Guard, held the gates and commanded the city under the very guns of the Castle; and in the morning a pile of extinguished torches and a dead man hanging from a dyer's pole were all the evidence to show that what people, startled from their beds, had seen at their windows was not an hallucination of the night. And all Queen Caroline's lawyers and all the spies in Scotland could not bring home the guilt to a single man. Old Edinburgh's size intensifies the strangeness of this and of many another wild passage in her story. The mystery of London lies in its interminable jungles of houses and in its vast areas of divergent forms of civilization. One of the most potent appeals made to the imagination by Old Edinburgh is the narrowness of the stage on which her big effects were played.

III

Like the daughter of many a famous beauty, the New Town of Edinburgh, since she has grown up, has not had justice done to her. A great deal, of course, was made of the new baby.

Craig's plan was hailed as an inspiration, and Provost Drummond, the 'onlie begetter,' was praised with sweet words:

'By thee Auld Reekie throve and grew
Delightfu' to her children's view;
Nae mair shall Glasgow's striplings threep
Their city's beauty and its shape,
While our new city spreads around
Her bonny wings on fairy ground.'

Writers and poets acclaimed her early beauties. Certainly, nobody gave her a handsome present like the Lafayette Memorial which America gave to Paris, or Bartholdi's statue of Liberty which a Frenchman gave to New York, for that was not the custom of the time, but writers of all nations gave her their handsomest eulogy. When Scott was a boy the unfinished George Street was 'threeped' as the most splendid street in Europe and Princes Street as the most elegant terrace. Even when his poems and romances had turned his generation mad for mediævalism, there was enthusiasm to spare for the New Town which the Modern Athens idea brought to a focus. Scott's friend, Mrs. Hughes of Uffington, who visited him in 1824, apologizes because a passing glance of admiration at the New Town had sufficed her.

Every one had his say about the future of the Princess. Cockburn says that 'there were more schemes and pamphlets and discussions and anxiety about the improvement of our edifices and prospects within ten years after the war had ceased (1815) than throughout the whole of the preceding century and a half.' Money had been lavished upon the New Town, about

two millions being spent in less than thirty years. She was so expensive an offspring that in 1833 her parent had to come to an arrangement with her creditors. Some of her most costly baubles were stopped in the making. The Parthenon, then being built on Calton Hill as a National Memorial to commemorate the achievements of the Peninsular War, still shows a naked screen of twelve columns and the entablature against the sky. Robert Adam's new University and Charlotte Square remained to be finished in a modified form by other hands many years later. The black and yellow chequered floor in the hall of the Register House is not the marble of Adam's design, but painted wood.

At that time the young beauty may be said to have 'come out' under slightly equivocal circumstances, but she believed in her star and grew yearly more handsome. The National Gallery was added by Playfair to his Royal Institution on the Mound; a region of imposing new terraces and crescents appeared in the south-west on the Dean estate; a noble company of bank buildings arose about St. Andrew Square, and the City Council in 1842 ventured bravely on another piece of formal town-planning, this time for the district between Edinburgh and Leith. Unhappily the railway was allowed to have its way, and the plan was ruined by a goods station, which might have been placed elsewhere without hardship to trade. However, the terraces round Calton Hill were built, and the planning in the vicinity of the hill was saved, but of the three streets planned to radiate from the hill with a vista of its terraced height only one exists. By a neat piece of irony, Playfair Street, which was to perpetuate the name of the designer, is the site of the railway yard.

After this the City Council seems to have become much like other city councils, and Edinburgh, which had begun so splendidly, was allowed to develop in simple hugger-mugger fashion. The district round Holyrood was ruined, and hopeless parts, like Dalry and Gorgie, sprang up. In the latter half of last century the city owed its most striking things to a wonderful succession of public-spirited citizens who showered upon her a cathedral, a college, a portrait gallery, several schools and institutions, and two great halls, and laid out public gardens. Few cities have inspired such generous gifts from their children, and who can say how great a part of this is due to the far-seeing Councils who took thought and planned to make their city beautiful, worthy of great benefactions?

Yet it is not a little curious that in the last half-century there has been a certain fall in the world's appreciation of the New Town. Princes Street has been admired, as a matter of course, but one-half of Princes Street is really the Old Town. The rare beauty of Charlotte Square or the handsome St. Andrew Square or Queen Street and the streets that fall away towards the Firth seemed for the time to lose interest for the visitors who gave their impressions to print, and even the Edinburgh writers have shown faint enthusiasm for the New Town. Of course, in England and the Continent handsome cities and wings of cities were springing up, and the stately considered appearance of the New Edinburgh was not the novelty it had been, while Rossetti and Swinburne had given the dilettante tourist a new appetite for the romanticism of the Old Town. One of the outstanding things in Britain designed since Wren's time is Adam's Register House, with its fine approach, its perfect corner cupolas, and the

"THE REGISTER"

masterly treatment of the surface of its façade. It was built from the moneys of the Jacobite estates forfeited in the 'Forty-Five,' and is the finest of the many beautiful things that sprang from the misfortune of the Jacobites. It is rash for a visitor to generalize on these matters, but apart from architects (who certainly form a society large enough to permeate the mass of the Edinburgh middle-class), he will find even yet a surprising majority of persons interested in the arts who have never thought of the Register House as a thing of beauty. There has even in Edinburgh been talk of destroying Charlotte Square! It is time the National Monuments Commission were given power to schedule the façade of the Register House and at least the north side of Charlotte Square, Hamilton's Royal High School – that marvel of harmony in site and design – Chambers's Dundas Mansion (now a bank with an added porch), and the two corner buildings, with the urns, that group so charmingly with it in St. Andrew Square, and make these most beautiful pieces of architecture in Edinburgh secure for posterity. But there is the risk of the immediate future. The modern awakening to the importance of town-planning, however, is arousing also a general interest in architecture which the leaders of Edinburgh culture may rally to their aid when the forces of darkness gather again.

Edinburgh is becoming once more one of the chief attractions for students of modern architecture and town-planning, many of whom, I am told, never see the Old Town nearer than Princes Street; and among the younger London architects, whose study of Adam is one of the features of our age, a trip to Edinburgh is becoming a necessity. When they go they discover more than Adam, and the apparently endless vistas of stately crescent,

terrace and square, all of beautiful mason-work with many refinements of detail, set in great spacious streets, have a powerful effect on their imagination. Incidentally, some have found in Edinburgh the clue to Mr. Norman Shaw's massive treatment of London stone.

A tailor in the Boulevard des Italiens worked for some reason under the sign of '*L'Auld Reekie*,' and one of his assistants who started an opposition business in a neighbouring street put up as his sign '*Le Nouveau Auld Reekie*.' Students of architecture find a great deal of 'le nouveau Auld Reekie' in the New Town. The persistence of the bartizan-like stair turret gives a mediæval air to buildings dating from the middle of the nineteenth century, and the tremendous thickness of the house walls suggests at first sight that the builders were still contemplating the possibility of an English army giving them to the flames and the citizens returning to find the stone-work little the worse for it. I was told that in a Princes Street club a passenger lift was actually installed in the thickness of the wall! There is something peculiarly Auld Reekie, too, in the rounded treatment of the slate-work – those likeable little Edinburgh slates! – on the cheeks of the dormer-windows, making an effect like a turret.

But nothing can really be more classical than the New Town. Many of the monuments and public buildings are, as we have seen, 'souvenirs' of Greek and Roman edifices. One wide street succeeds another with Doric or Ionic doorways and great ranges of columns and pilasters, and deep, clean-cut windows relieved by classic lace-like ironwork. The style is used for modern ends with restraint and understanding that speak of a

tradition working through several generations. The architects had the inestimable advantage of designing in a fine local stone, and the mason-craft, profiting by the tremendous course of building that was forced upon it, rose to a remarkable point in workmanship. Look closely into the stone in the old part of the New Town and you will find that its peculiar quality is got by a kind of small ribbed tooling in the façades of the houses and by stronger methods in basements and bridge work. I have heard these differentiated by an old mason under the delightful terms 'droven,' 'stogen,' and 'scabbled' work. These particular refinements in mason-work are hardly now practised, and indeed Craigleith stone is little used, partly, I have been told, on account of the expense caused by its extreme hardness. Five-sixths of the New Town is said to have been built from that quarry, and there is even a romantic tradition that the seventeenth-century Heriot's School is of Craigleith stone brought to the site by a long line of women stretching from the quarry to Lauriston, who passed each stone from hand to hand along the line. The finest display of the stone and the mason-work is Hamilton's Parthenon screen on Calton Hill, where some of the blocks are fifteen tons in weight. The credit for the beautiful jointing of these monumental blocks, however, must chiefly be given to the architect Cockerell, then fresh from his study of the Grecian models, who instructed the Edinburgh masons in classic mason-work.

The long curved façade of Royal Terrace, which with Calton Terrace and Regent Terrace runs round three parts of Calton Hill, is one of the most impressive things in Edinburgh. In some of its parts there are signs that the tradition of scholarship

had waned from the previous generation, but the effect of this great assembly of ordered stone decorated by three groups of tall columns supporting massive pediments on this lofty site is very handsome. If the interiors lack the refinement in detail of the older buildings, they are imposing enough in their marble entrance halls and rooms over thirty feet long and fifteen feet high. To those who live in the apartments of this long high-set palace life must surely move to a stately measure. In front are hanging gardens, and below lie Leith and the sea. To come out of one of these handsome doorways on a summer night, to feel the salt breeze coming up from the Firth and see the Inchkeith light sparkling far below, as you walk this quarter-deck of Edinburgh, must be to taste a certain fine essence of life that cannot be found elsewhere. Yet, for some reason or other, Edinburgh society does not make its abode here, although two artists of European fame and sundry learned professors gave it a lead. The terrace, I am told, was originally built for Leith merchants, and has even been called 'Whisky Row' after a prosperous form of Leith's industries. The figure of a canny Leith merchant watching for his in-coming ship is said to be the real presence for the front doors of these classical palaces.

If all the houses in Edinburgh were destroyed its classical character could be disclosed by such details as the clothes-poles in the back-greens, which in the older part (behind York Place, for instance) are of a pretty classical form, clearly designed by an architect. The glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome stare at the visitor from all manner of unusual and ingenious places. His mind is tuned to remembrance of the loftiest expressions of the human spirit as well when he goes to

his grocer as when he visits the Museum. No tradesman seems to be permitted to open a shop in the New Town unless he is soundly classic in his shop-front. There is a beautiful Corinthian grocer near one of the great squares who exercises a strange fascination over those who linger at his frontage. I have been told by one who has studied the shop for some time that his romance of business was something like this. He began in Stockbridge in quite a small way with one Doric pilaster. By and by, as things prospered, he thought he would make the venture and go up the hill, and so one fine morning behold the new shop half-way to Princes Street, and – yes! – Ionic columns a quarter engaged! Imagine the joy of his wife. Then, after years of prosperity, and perhaps with a grocer's licence in his safe, the last step is faced and taken, and we see him to-day at the top of the hill with fluted Corinthian columns and a full entablature. May not one say that every grocer's boy in Edinburgh carries a Corinthian order in his message-basket?

New Edinburgh, of course, did not stop with Royal Terrace; rather it began thence a stronger flight, uniting the outlying villages with the capital and changing the whole face of the country. A good deal of the New Town of Craig's plan has been rebuilt. It is not proposed here to deal with these developments, many of which show that the refined taste and scholarship that distinguished the older tradition still live in the work of to-day, finding handsome expression through the solution of new problems. Such notable pieces of contemporary architecture as the M'Ewan Hall and the new Roman Catholic Church in Morningside must at least be mentioned in any survey, however wayward, of modern Edinburgh.

IV

Let us turn to the streets and glance a little more particularly at what makes the charm of New Edinburgh. It is difficult – although it has been done – to overpraise Princes Street. It is better than the Rue de Rivoli with Montmartre set in the Tuileries Gardens, or Piccadilly with Dover Castle set in the Green Park. It is better because, for one thing, it is on a ridge, and the gardens falling away into a pleasant hollow accentuate the scale of the Castle Rock and add a sort of distance that lends enchantment to the view. Music rises from the gardens, the rock re-echoes to the pipes, but the promenader in Princes Street sees neither the pipers nor the crowd beside them. Not till there is music in these gardens on moonlight nights will their full possibilities be known. Some day soon the iron fences of the eastern part are to be thrown down and the place trusted to the people as in continental towns, where street gardens have long been open all night and civilization is certainly not in advance of Edinburgh's. The Nor' Loch, which would have rendered the final touch of romance to this spot, has gone, but I am not among those who lament without ceasing the railway's presence there. The little volleys of white smoke it sends against the hill are not unpicturesque, and there is something not at all unfitting in the thought of the unending stream of humanity flowing swiftly past the unchangeable rock.

Princes Street has a way of turning everything, however obdurate, to favour and to comeliness. Repairing operations on tramcar lines do not usually arouse æsthetic enthusiasm, but the repair of the Princes Street lines produces a multitude of fluttering little red flags that make a merry sight, and at night

the fires and flares blazing away against the darkness over the long entrenchment are a really memorable thing. To the true lover of Edinburgh there was nothing difficult, even in the half-smothered subterranean howl of the old tramway cables, which rose clearly when the traffic of the street has died away. I brought myself to the point when it seemed to me like Coleridge's brook:

> 'That to the quiet streets all night
> Singeth a quiet tune.'

But what is even the most fervent lover of Edinburgh to say about the monster railway hotel at the east end with the huge tower? Too prosperous for a white elephant, not handsome enough for a giraffe, it puts the Calton Hill completely out of scale and ruins Edinburgh's most delicate piece of architecture – the Register House of Robert Adam. Nearly all that was gained by the good sense of old Playfair, who kept the National Gallery and the Royal Academy of a low elevation so that they lie like graceful classical ornaments on the bosom of the city, is undone by this abnormal growth. Neither it nor its predecessors had any right to be there. The Town Council of 1760 never sanctioned buildings on the south side of the street, which was, of course, no part of the New Town scheme. Bad citizenship, however, appeared even in Edinburgh, buildings were quickly erected, and all the well-considered effort of the community was like to be destroyed, when the Town succeeded in getting an interdict that stopped the mischief, though it was too late to save the part on which the hotel now stands. But at this point it

is always well to turn your eyes from the New Town and contemplate the beautiful soaring spire of the General Assembly Hall. By some miracle of good fortune a Pugin spire arose at the one part where an ugly or commonplace thing would have ruined the whole silhouette of the Old Town (to say nothing of the amazing view of it from the Grassmarket), so modernity has something to its credit.

Two churches appear at the western end, placed rather oddly side by side, giving a comical resemblance to locomotives steaming into the station. St. John's Episcopal Church, where the famous Dean Ramsay of the *Reminiscences* preached, is a shrunken St. George's Chapel, Windsor. St. Cuthbert's, which is nearer the Castle, is the old West Kirk of Edinburgh, and its history goes back to the eighth century. Cromwell made a barrack of it. In 1745, when Prince Charles was in Holyrood and there were many armed Highlandmen among the congregation, the stout Whig incumbent prayed: 'Bless the King. Thou knowest what King I mean. As for that young man who has come among us to seek an earthly crown, we beseech Thee to take him to Thyself and give him a crown of glory.' The Prince is said to have received the story in high good-humour. It is a well-known story, but it is a pleasant one to think about as you pass the church with its long graveyard (where De Quincey sleeps) in the shadow of the Castle. The courage of the minister, the apprehension of the congregation, the anger and indecision of the Jacobites in the crowded old edifice with its multitude of petty galleries, stuck up one above another to the very rafters like so many pigeons' nests – how ever did our Scottish Hogarths keep their brushes off such a subject? A companion story of

Jacobite daring is also worth recalling in Princes Street. When Prince Charlie was marching on Edinburgh, a company of Cope's panic-stricken dragoons were seen galloping along the Lang Dyke (now Princes Street) with one gigantic Jacobite in pursuit, and all Edinburgh looked on in amaze while the chase went on without pause round and up the High Street to Castle Hill, where the pursuer left his dagger sticking in the Castle gate. In after years the big Jacobite became a satisfactory Edinburgh lawyer, and the dagger is still treasured by his descendants.

The buildings on Princes Street are less seen than those in any of the big Edinburgh streets, for every one walks on the north side, but a number of them are worthy of their site. Some care has been shown for uniformity in scale, except in the case of a draper from my western city, whose building might elsewhere be an accomplished and interesting piece of shop architecture, but here is not free from the suspicion of bad manners in well-dressed stone. But really wicked things have been done in Princes Street since then, and the Register House is insulted by the ugly form of an American cheap bazaar.

Walking along the garden side of the street, the visitor should keep his eyes for those astonishing gaps where the side-streets run out of Princes Street into nothing. The illusion of Edinburgh hanging on the edge of the world gives an unending pleasure, especially at those streets that have statues just beyond the bend where they tilt to the sea. You see the statues sharp against the clouds like gods descending. It is only Edinburgh that can make an immortal of a middling statue. The citizens too on those streets, appearing first hat, then head, then bended body, seem actually to be advancing out of a hidden sea. You

feel that away down on the Firth the folk in boats look up at you riding in mid-air.

George Street, with its airy width and reserved seemly houses with bright windows, has something of the cool elderly charm of a well-kept, old-fashioned, half-deserted library. An undergrowth of wooden shop-fronts appears here and there to spoil the clean handsome lines of its original buildings, and some of them have been replaced by smartish blocks of shops, startlingly out of scale, and by a dark-browed Italian building that seems intended to cope with a burning sun and blinding light whenever they happen to come to Edinburgh. Many of the houses are charming in their simple refined fronts that depend for their whole effect on the just proportions of the windows and doorways and the neat shadows of their projections, with a delicately modelled fanlight to relieve the severity. There is in many of these buildings an elegant northern sobriety, softened by a half-reluctant hint of shy grace, that corresponds not unfittingly with many of the faces one sees in Princes Street.

The interiors are decorated with the same classic taste which sometimes grows a little unruly in the privacy of the stair-wells, where trophies of drums and trumpets and masks and fans are flourished around the walls in tinted plaster relief. There is a good deal of the brothers Adam's work in these houses, some of the marble mantelpieces being very richly wrought, reminding one of the mantels in Stratford Place in London. St. Andrew's Church raises its handsome spire – a debt Edinburgh owes to an engineer, Major Andrew Fraser – and on the other side, the Assembly Rooms and the Music Hall project an arcaded portico over the pavement. Blackwood's famous publishing house is

THE BANKS

another of its lions, but the church, music, oratory and letters fade before the magnificence of the banks that give the overword to this street.

After its site, the Castle, and the antique look of the Old Town, perhaps the most impressive thing in Edinburgh is its Banks. They are handsomer than the greater Pall Mall clubs that are still said so to astonish fashionable men from Paris and Vienna. Lombard Street, with its cheap and dingy buildings, seems only a temporary lodging for Mammon; George Street and St. Andrew Square might be his very home. Many of these stately temples are crowned with tall stone figures blessing and praising him. The British Linen Bank in St. Andrew Square is one of the most highly-wrought Palladian buildings of its century with its tremendously decorated cornice breaking round its six bold Corinthian columns, each surmounted by a lonely gesticulating figure – a diverting piece of Piranesian rhetoric in stone. The frieze bears rich festoons of flowers and cupids, and the figures are singularly effective, the sculptor having gauged the elevation boldly and by elongated proportion attained the result that naturalistic sculptors always miss. The figures on another bank in St. Andrew Square and on the Bank of Scotland in St. Giles Street are also worth particular consideration. Indeed, the architectural sculpture in Edinburgh is a feature as deserving of study as the monuments in the streets and gardens.

At one end of George Street is St. Andrew Square, with its stately green-courted bank building and quiet gardens pinned to the slope of the hill by the tall slim Melville Column, without which it would surely find itself one fine day in the Firth. At the other end is Charlotte Square, certainly the most delightful

domestic Square in the world, with its intimate greenery and honey-coloured stone and elegant sphinxes. The house at each end of the north side shows a separate triangular roof which gives each sphinx a pyramid for a background – a characteristic Adam conceit. His design for St. George's Church was altered by a later hand, and its corner cupolas, which would have increased its resemblance to St. Paul's, were left out, but however better the original might have been (it would not have been so elongated for one thing), St. George's has the stately grace we expect from Adam. The test of it is this, that it does not offend the rest of the buildings, where Adam curbed his profusion of embellishment and wrought out a design which for variety, delicacy and warmth of emphasis, has never been surpassed in works of its kind. The aristocratic genius of the architect lingers too in the garden, which is charming with its sweet lawns and small leafy trees. Prince Albert on his horse rides in the middle of the Square. It is more like an enlarged statuette than a statue, but it is after all an Albert Memorial, and Albert Memorials have done worse things.

All the modern Athenians have been host or guest in these houses. It is pleasant to think of Lord Cockburn, of the *Memoirs*, and his friends, but I like to associate the Square rather with little Marjorie Fleming, who lived near by at No. 1 Charlotte Street. To those who do not know the Maidie's writings in Dr. John Brown's setting, one must add that she was a dear friend of Scott and that she died in her ninth year. Her letters and poems, although unsuited perhaps for the sophisticated modern child, are among the most authentic and delightful things in literature. She mentions the Square in her first letter:

'There are a great many girls in the Square, and they cry just like a pig when we are under the painful necessity of putting it to death.' Such a talent was hers that in a verse written when she was only six she found the *mot juste* for Edinburgh:

'In a Conspicuous Town she lives
And to the poor her money gives.'

What legions of Edinburgh children must have played in this old Square since Marjorie Fleming's time! Scott and she must have had many walks in it, for Castle Street is close by. The friendship – for it was no ordinary relationship of an elder and a pet – is one of the most touching and suggestive things in Scott's manly life.

Then there is Queen Street, which has many palaces and wonderful views over the Firth. No one can understand the rigours of life in Edinburgh until he has seen Queen Street in a snow-storm and felt the 'on-ding' of the snow hurled over the estuary by the north wind. In summer I remember the long solemn line of its classical façades against the sunsets, with a stray bird chirping in the hanging gardens, and a long Edinburgh lorry returning home along the wide street with the driver and three friends sitting silent and resigned with bent heads and hands between their knees.

Queen Street leads you to Moray Place, which is to Charlotte Square what Belgrave is to Berkeley Square. It is a heavy father of a place, massive as a Raeburn portrait, with a tremendous entablature that plays a queer effect in the interior of some of the top rooms. My memory of the Place is of a house much smaller than it seemed from the street and of a fine staircase with

spacious landings and recesses for 'sitting out,' suggesting that they were designed by a Lord of Session with a number of daughters on his hands. On the north side the people must live in the back rooms, which look out on the deep ravine of the Water of Leith and beyond it away over the Forth to Fife. Out of Moray Place you come into coldly elegant pentagons, octagons, and crescents and circuses, in which the originals of Kay's portraits and the protagonists of the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine* lived their warm idiosyncratic lives. Farther west and you are in Queensferry Street, where there was a small cab-proprietor, to whom, as to a typical Edinburgh man who knew all his works, Max Müller was taken. He must have been a proper preparation for the Dean Bridge, one of the really great effects in the town.

You walk down a spacious regular West-End street and suddenly you find that you are on a bridge, that the city has fallen to pieces, and that you are looking down on a little seventeenth-century village, with a mill and a mill-dam and an ancient guild-hall with carved symbols and holy mottoes, lying a hundred feet below you. On the other side you look down on a scene that reminds you of the neat sylvan views on the title-page of some old edition of Burns's poems. The river winds at the bottom of a valley between long swelling green slopes and hanging gardens, and beside it winds a path for lovers, and a Doric temple overhangs its waters. It is a most uplifting and unexpected sight, and when first you see it your hat may be blown off your head and whirled into the abyss without your stirring a hand to save it. The bridge, which is worthy of the wonderful place, is a noble design by Telford.

After this, a pleasant exercise in towncraft is to return to Princes Street, walk eastward for a couple of hundred yards, then take a northward street and try to find the Water of Leith again. You think of it as running parallel to Princes Street a short distance down, but you will walk and walk and find many things but never a hint of water. The New Town seems to have palmed it as completely as the conjurer palms the white rabbit, and in your memory the sight from the Dean Bridge becomes more magical than ever. The clue to this illusion is that Queensferry Road and the streets near the Dean Bridge run off at a tangent from the rectangular planning of Craig's part.

In the course of your search you will find Heriot Row, with its quiet genteel houses at the bottom of wide gardens, wherein the tenants held *fêtes champêtres* under Chinese lanterns in the days when Edinburgh did not take itself too severely, and you will note how the wide pavement (on which you rarely see more than two souls and a Writer to the Signet) has recently been made yet wider, not necessarily for promenading but as a guarantee of gentility. Possibly the extra two feet of pavement is an automatic result of an increased number of lawyers living in the Row, just as in Glasgow every additional 10,000 tons of shipping entails an increased depth of so many inches in the harbour. One of the streets that bisect Heriot Row runs down to the astonishingly bold church (with the weak tower) of St. Stephen's, which splits the thoroughfare in a curiously dramatic way, as though to put an emphatic period to Craig's plan, which there reaches its termination.

There are scores of stately and curious places that call for mention, but one must stop somewhere, and that is as good a place

as another. I will say nothing of Drummond Place with its air of proud decay, nor of York Place, douce and silver-dark, where Raeburn's studio now stands in a region of the 'ordained surveyor.' (What is an ordained surveyor? Does he have to sign the Solemn League and Covenant, and is he ordained, when young, by the laying-on of foot-rules? Anyway, he is pure Edinburgh.) Enough it is to say with the poet Thomson, the uncle of Craig:

> 'August, around, what public works I see!
> Lo, stately streets! lo, squares that court the breeze!'

v

'Hell,' said Byron, 'is a city much like London.' Against that I put it on record that Edinburgh – even to its Calton Jail – was considered by the thaumaturgic artist, John Martin, good enough to figure in the vision of the future that he entitled, I think, 'Heaven from the S.W.' Perhaps we should not marvel unduly, for did not Burns declare on a former occasion that in Heaven itself he would ask no more than just a Highland welcome! Martin's Edinburgh in a west wind and a Highland welcome would be a celestial combination far too good for the best of us; the city, as it is, has been loved passing well, east wind and all, and love of it has coloured many pages and very various temperaments. To take one instance, there are odd savours of Edinburgh (always with its jail) in surprisingly many of the ideal pictures of the type which were popular about the 'sixties. Turner, whose drawing of Edinburgh with Highlanders dancing to the pipes on Calton Hill, and the Jail occupying a good part of the picture, has an ethereal echo of the city in one of his

ideal Italian visions. To be sure, the resemblance between the Englishman's ideal of Italy and of heaven – which are said to be the same thing – and the city of Edinburgh may not mean that the one is derived from the other, but rather (as antiquarians say when they have proved too much) that both have a common origin which is now lost in the mists of antiquity.

A jail which can hold its own in an ideal synthesis is clearly no ordinary House of Correction, and it behoves the writer to give it a place here, although it is the custom in books about Edinburgh either to ignore its existence or to give it a mention not at all commensurate with its importance. It is, however, true that in the index of one work it figures as 'Jail, Calton, beautiful situation of.' Sometimes strangers take it for the Castle, but, *je me demande*, is it not really the Scott monument? Elliot, who designed it, was a great admirer of Scott, and Scott was an admirer of the building. It was built after the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Marmion* had turned Britain enthusiastically, even comically, mediæval. In the names of steamboats, in the feudal grandeur of the titles lettered in faded paint on the wooden gates of little suburban houses in Streatham and Blackheath, you may still see the ashes of Scott's earlier fires. What is the Calton Jail after all but an architect's dream of Branksome Hall put to a practical and, certes, very feudal use? Seen on a gloomy evening, its blind bulk gripping the hill-side, the mediæval Jail is one of the few deliberate features in the fantastic side of Edinburgh which colour so vividly the impressions of one's first night in the famous city, and it sets the proper mood for so much of the rest. The formidable mass of the Old Town, peaked and gabled and spired with its thousand windows and reeking chimneys, and

the dark Castle, solitary on its shadowy rock, seem to invite thoughts of wild solitary expeditions and silent reprisals – the kind of place where one can imagine a Prince or a reigning Grand Duke stealing down in disguise into the town for nocturnal adventures among his subjects in the wynds and closes! You remember with peculiar satisfaction the legends of the Gudeman of Ballangeich, and marvel that it was really five hundred years ago.

Then there is the other aspect of Edinburgh's fantasy; the side in which the unexpected and the curious appear as the ordinary state of things accepted by the stoutest citizen in his everyday life, although the stranger finds himself thinking that it is all happening in a dream. Every one who has had the luck to look into Edinburgh life has seen something of it. It is a result of the congregation of buildings set on a wild place of hills and yawning ravines, where one ought to struggle over with Zermatt boots and an alpenstock rather than in patent-leather shoes and in motor-buses, and – may one say? – the peculiarities of such a city reflected in the life of its sensitive inhabitants.

There is a quiet little stone terrace of one-storey houses, tenanted mostly by doctors and surgeons, which you pass on your way from Leith Walk to Royal Terrace. For the massiveness of its porticoes and the respectability of its tenants it seems oddly small, but otherwise it is as sedate as a half-calf quarto. You enter these impressive doors and find you are really in the attics, and your host will conduct you downstairs to the drawing-room, and you may leave two or three floors down by a door that opens into a quiet back street at the base of Calton Hill! Another thing that the stranger can never forget may be seen in August

in any of the West-End crescents. I remember finding myself late one afternoon in a stately classical terrace in a spacious street. Not a soul was in sight, and the sunshine playing on the great stone buildings with their windows gleaming in their deep sockets, and on the broad pavement and the empty street, seemed to have a voice, as gas sometimes has late at night when one is alone in a room. Suddenly I noticed that all the doorways in the terrace were boarded up from top to bottom, some with plain deals, others with neatly painted green and brown wood. It was quite eerie. I felt like Zobeidé in the Petrified City, and when I came on an old blind man seated all alone reading aloud from the Holy Bible (perhaps the sound of my footsteps set him to his task), he might have been the one man there spared from the Wrath. It was as though the plague had been there and the doors sealed for all time. To be sure, it was only the curious Edinburgh summer custom of leaving the houses without a caretaker and protecting the polish of the doors by a system of matchwood boarding. But all the same, it is a weird thing when first you see it.

In these two kinds of fantasy bred by this strange place I think you find the nucleus of the dream enchantment that Stevenson and Barrie have sought to throw over London. Besides the idea of the romantic city where a sort of Gudeman o' Marlborough Hoose had nocturnal adventures, Stevenson brought in the *haar*. As Ariel put the glamour on Caliban, so he put the *haar* on London; its white freakish mystery drifts all through the *New Arabian Nights*. Barrie in his *Edinburgh Eleven* complained of Stevenson that 'the grotesque, the uncanny hold his soul.' Yet we see that Barrie, too, found in London only the wistful, the

whimsical, the preposterous: you enter by his attic and go downstairs; you stroll casually to business along the edge of a precipice; you come to a City which has no doors. It is as though Edinburgh stimulated and satisfied the sense of the fantastic in her imaginative citizens, and when they went elsewhere, what were these dull touns to them until they had invested them with an enchanted atmosphere that was all their own – and Edinburgh's?

In this enchantment of Edinburgh we feel how strong is the northern flavour given by the unexpected heights, the chasms, the suddenness of the eclipses and prospects of this strangely poised composition of man's coping on Nature's walls. I think that even in the poverty of the trees her most salient characteristics are heightened. In London the ancient manorial trees were often preserved when Bloomsbury and Belgravia were built over, but to Edinburgh's loss her old trees were callously cut down – Cockburn's *Memoirs* are full of instances – when the New Town was being built and afterwards. No trees were planted in Princes Street or in George Street, and those in the gardens of the squares and crescents seem to have been kept as meagre as possible. The result is that the scale of the architecture is notably increased by the undersized trees, and although cities of less dignity might cry for obscuring foliage, Edinburgh can face the open with some confidence and can take pride in her fine austerity.

Then there comes a moment, too, when the delicate little trees quietly assert themselves as potent factors in the spell of Edinburgh. In a winter afternoon at dusk, when the sun has left a tinge of red in the west and the waters of the Forth are *blae* as

THE SAUT BUCKETS

a dead man's eye, while night steals in from the east, and the sea mists and the town smoke conspire to help her – then, citizens on their steep way down from the Old Town to their homes in Stockbridge do well to stop at the corner of Queen Street and look west. From the hanging gardens the empty little trees with their deep-blue limbs rise and unite the grey astringent pink of the sky with the wan green grass and black earth, while the lemon-grey stone of the Heriot Row houses appears at the bottom, with perhaps a lit window or two, their glow still paled by the twilight, to give a hint of home and firesides. At such a time I have felt there a sense of fugitive beauty that was almost intolerable, something in the blend of intimacy and mystery in the scene that seemed to say that the key to the secret behind the material face of things lay there – there all about one – but that night was coming on, and in a moment more the spell would be gone, the faculties would re-assert themselves, and the soul return to its silence. That spirit of strange wounded beauty, of which Watteau among painters had the surest vision, lingers somewhere in Edinburgh, and these delicate starved little trees among the masonry are the magic wands to summon it.

There are other places where a curious fugitive charm, that exists quite apart from the blithe bravery of the New Town or the haunting grimness of the Old, may sometimes be surprised. My favourite is the little steep crooked street that falls away from Waterloo Place, just before you turn up the steps to Calton Hill, and plunges obliquely into Leith Walk, where the old low road branches off to go under the Regent Arch and up into the Old Town. From either end this little street seems a blind alley,

and of the few who happen to notice it, it is a rare pilgrim whose curiosity leads him to explore. Behind the noises in the front streets a strange quiet seems here to live on.

The little street begins mysteriously, for the single-storey building at its upper corner shows a few straggling trees that in spring shake their green arms over the stonework, as the human prisoners might in the Calton Jail over the way. Look a little more closely and you can see the heads of a tombstone or two. It is a tiny forgotten segment of the old Calton graveyard, which was cut in two a hundred years ago by the Regent Bridge approach. A presentable piece of it, with a soaring Reformers' Monument and a Scottish memorial to Abraham Lincoln (usually gay with flags of stars and stripes), and a heavy temple in memory of one Robert Burn, who was at least a good father, as it was 'erected by his relict and twelve surviving children,' makes a conspicuous appearance across the road. It provides one of the most singular effects in Edinburgh's fantasy, for a subterranean subsidence has split and cracked the massive tombs in the wildest way, the whole place suggesting that the dead had stirred in their graves at the first scream of the railway below them and had settled down again when they found that it was not the Last Trump. But of the dead in the forgotten segment on the north, no one knows anything and no one can tell how to reach their graves, although the little steep street must know, for it was once the only way to the graveyard, or for that matter to a jaunt to Calton Hill. Both destinations may explain the few desperate little 'refreshment' shops, that cling to the side of the street and seem in danger of tumbling backwards into the congeries of deep fore-courts and

steep stairs, and mouldy gardens with paved paths, and gateways with decent pieces of ornamental ironwork worn thin as an old fishwife's marriage-ring. The whole place is shabby and queer, the houses all at different levels, but there is something elegant in the diminutive scale of it, and in the traces of a past gentility in the ironwork and paved yards, the box borders to the little gardens, and the neat flights of steps.

At one part, a building of some style, with a row of dormer windows, is perched up against the Calton rock, with an apron of hanging garden in front and the queerest arrangement of stone gangways and steep stairs that must drive all new tenants – if ever there are new tenants – distracted. The Calton rock appears through the pavement and seems to shoulder the steps and stairs this way and that. A few shabby little children play gravely about, shopkeeping on the different levels, sometimes on the parapets of the stone gangways, or hopping at the game of *peever*, drawing cabalistic chalk-marks on the pavement flags. Warders in the prison and lamplighters, they say, live here, and that adds a further touch of mystery to the place – those who bring the light into the darkness of the city and those who keep watch on men shut up in solitary cells. Something peculiarly Edinburgh hangs about this spot. The living rock everywhere and the seemly old house up against the sky, shabby, yet with a certain pride and stateliness, the endless steps and stairs, the shy little touches of green, the air of reticence and inner romance. You feel that there must be something worth knowing about a house so isolated and fortified. They say that Burns's 'Clarinda' had lived there.

This is not the only spot of the kind that waits for the right

seeker in the right mood. St. James's Square behind the Register House is to me another prime specimen. There is a melancholy drooping hawthorn mourning in the mouldy circular garden that is the very soul of the thing. Some of the tall hard-faced old tenements that stare dryly down on it have known better days.

Robert Burns, who lodged in No. 30, brought some grand company up its tower staircase, and there were many *bien* tenants. Andrew Geddes, an artist whose importance in British art had not yet reached its full recognition, lived there, and Mr. Matthew Sheriff, upholsterer, who dined with his brother-in-law, Deacon Brodie, the night the Deacon robbed the Excise Office, and sought to save him by an alibi which turned on the time it took a well-dined man to walk from Brodie's Close in the Lawnmarket to 'Bunker's Hill,' as the square was then nicknamed. This nickname was unanimously given because the news of the battle reached Edinburgh on the day when the first stone of its second house was laid, and the two builders somehow fell out and fought together before an immense assembly of joyful spectators. 'Bunker's Hill' seems to have been forgotten in the planning of the New Town, and its eminence, which with proper architectural treatment would have made a striking end to a vista, has been lost to the picturesqueness of the city. It remained forgotten until the Government Department – which has also intruded on the little street at Calton Hill – discovered it as a suitable place for hiding some unmanageable buildings, and then it was forgotten again. Many Edinburgh people have never seen it. No one seems to know whether that blackened thorn-tree ever shows blossom of red

or white in May. Sometimes you can see sea-gulls flying over it, and one morning I saw a bluejacket, who had probably tried a short cut to Princes Street through some of the partly-chartered by-ways that straggle off Leith Walk. He wandered into the little square and was, as it were, brought up all standing by its back-of-beyond look, wondering where in the name of Blind Hookey he had come to! The spirit of Blind Hookey dwells in many a forgotten little square and place in Edinburgh that leads a furtive life of its own apart from the thoroughfares and transactions of the city, and only a murder or the erection of a crucifix can chase him away.

There are, then, the elegant parallelograms of the New Town, well considered and refined in detail, formal in arrangement as an Adam's drawing-room; the towering labyrinths of the Old Town, like a blackened mediæval hall, now used for a kitchen and servants' quarters, such as we see to-day in some of the great mansions of England; and lastly these forgotten attics turned lumber-room, which still have odd little graces of their own, and harbour one or two quaint great-grandmotherly ornaments well worth rummaging among on a rainy day.

CHAPTER II

EDINBURGH WINDOWS

PEOPLE WALKING IN PRINCES STREET AT NIGHT, ESPECIALLY on early winter nights when a slight mist from the valley exaggerates the craggy heights of the Old Town and gives its lights a richer glow, its darkness a murky grandeur, may sometimes have wondered, as they lifted their eyes towards them, what was behind those little golden spots that stamp so strange an arabesque across the Edinburgh night. The warmly-clad promenaders, however, have other business on hand: the challenge of eyes, love-making in quiet Scots fashion; marching to parties, mounting into quietly-lit clubs where stags' heads of many points repel the gaze of the street; grouping at street corners, and toddling off into deep taverns in side alleys; hurrying along to evening lectures and classes; hailing motor-cabs and sailing away out into the western terraces. But if the Princes Street folk do look up to the Old Town dreaming over the valley, the disposition and vagaries of the lights should arouse speculation in a people naturally gifted with a love for exercise of the mind.

Mystery hangs about these windows. It is not only that night confuses and enlarges the lights in this locality – a strong lamp in a back wynd coming forward, a curtained light in the front falling back, while the edges of gables and towers cut them into fantastic shapes – but the whole astonishing spectacle of the dark city, with its lit windows rising so starkly out of the grass and rocks, reacts like poetry and music upon that hinterland of dreams that even the most prosaic of us carries in his brain. I remember, when visiting Edinburgh as a boy, how my first

walk down the Canongate at night filled me with horrible expectation. That long, straggling, unbroken street with its thousands of peopled windows – where had I seen it before? It was like a street I had known in my dreams, only there the windows were crowded with white faces gibbering down on me and there was no way out of it. Captain John Porteous must have seen something like that in the glare of the torches, as they marched him down the West Bow between the towering *lands* to the Grassmarket, to dance in air from a dyer's pole.

'Up the Lawn-market,
Down the West Bow,
Up the lang ladder –
Down the little tow.'

That was the way of John Porteous, Captain of the City Guard. The cliff front of Old Edinburgh at night is the stuff that dreams are made of.

Let us try to identify the lights as they appear from the New Town. The Castle usually shows a few square glimmers and one tall oblong shape which is, I think, the staircase window of the pleasant Queen Anne stone house (one of Edinburgh's architectural delights), where the Governor of the Castle lodged. Lower down comes the cluster of warm lights at Ramsay Lodge and at the Free Church students' settlement, where young men, when thinking of the next, can enjoy one of the finest views of the present world. Then the lights multiply and rise higher and become more varied in the congeries of Milne's Court and James's Court. The domed bulk of the Bank of Scotland, sitting high on its vaults like a fat, cross-legged idol on its

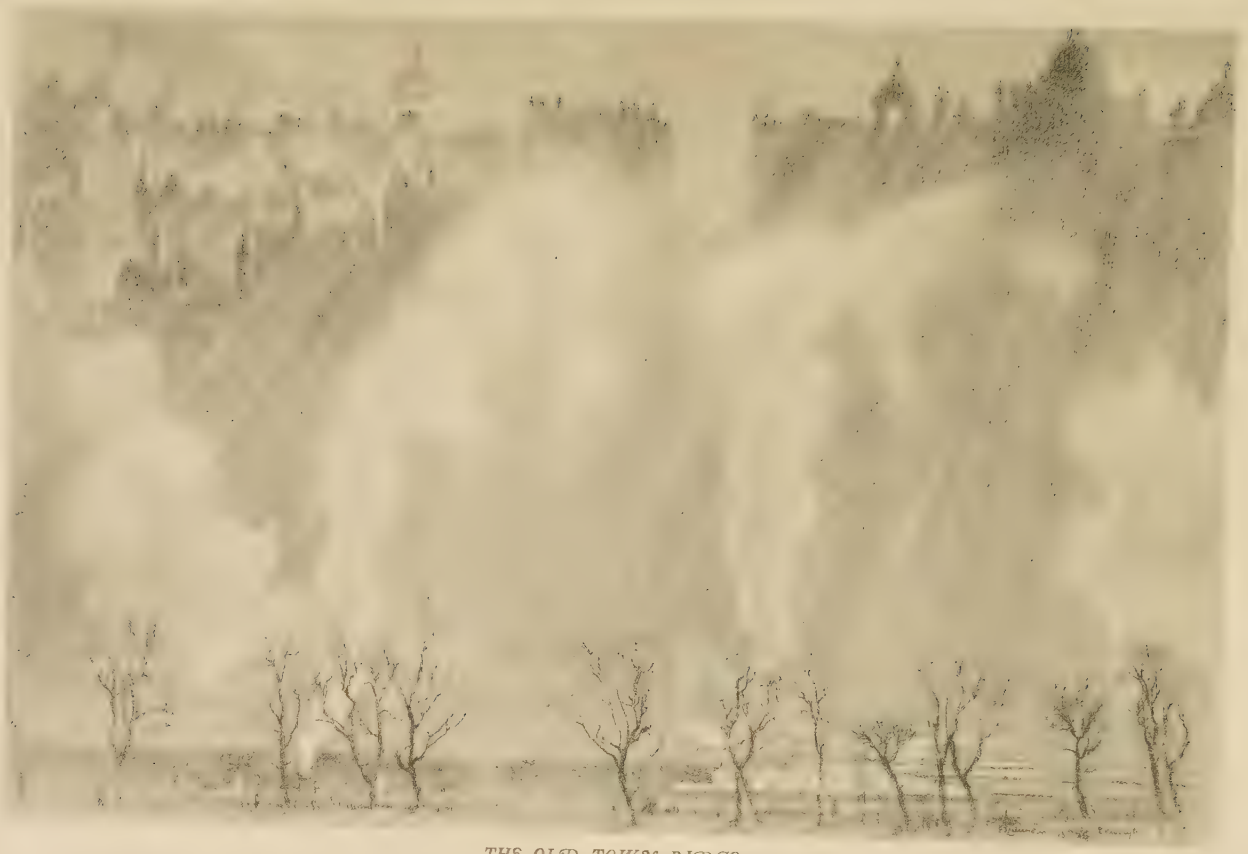
treasure, screens some of the lower buildings, but others rise behind it in serried rows up to the gable whose crowsteps are like ladders to climb the sky. Some are students' halls, a few are workshops, but the great body of the lights are in houses once built for rich men but now subdivided again and again and let to the very poorest. Towards the top the lights grow dimmer and rarer. I used to try to identify the windows and the closes in which they appeared. They invited exploration, like caves seen far up on a mountain side. One thought the people behind the lights could not be quite ordinary people. Something of a different age would linger about them, communicated from the old houses and their Alpine life.

One window in particular used to tempt me. It seemed to be in one of the tall back *lands*, and although it had no curtain the light was always dim and queer. Some one trimmed and lit it high up there in the dark old town with Orion's Belt a little above it. What was behind it? and who was looking out over the valley at the bright-burning shops and hotels of Princes Street? In the cold sharp light of morning the *lands* seemed shrunken and haggard and some of them had returned to their modern guise; the chimney-stacks were no longer giant hands clutching the air with thimbled fingers, and the thin closes that looked so patchy and sinister in their few lights, became more like steep back alleys in other cities. My window was gone, I could not identify it; it kept its mystery, and so in my memory of it many faces may appear; Deacon Brodie in a black mask keeks out for a moment, and the light vanishes at the turn of his dark lantern; the brave Doctor Cameron, with blood on his hair, closes and opens the shutters again as he signals to his

friends waiting across the Nor' Loch to convey him to the boat that lies at the pier o' Leith – 'now all was done that man could do and all was done in vain'; Bothwell, with a broken sword, is breathing hard and cleansing his wound by candlelight, staring at a little mirror of polished steel on the wall. Or again, it is the white faces of Bell Calvert and her man looking down into the close where the Laird of Dalcastle lies stabbed by his unnatural brother, and cries, 'O, dog of hell, it is you!' while the murderer scrambles off with his dreadful Familiar.

In course of time I made my exploration and came to know the people in the *lands*. Romance and odd peculiarities lingered there, of course, as elsewhere – more perhaps than elsewhere – but it was all, or almost all, of our time. James IV, in order to determine the original language of mankind, directed that two children should be sent to Inchkeith island and brought up by a dumb woman. The conclusion of the matter was that 'they spak gude Ebrew – puir bairnis.' Nothing so wonderful happened to the people who dwelt in the innumerable caves in these stony cliffs. They were gude Edinborie – puir bodies – little different from the poor folk in other parts of the town, except perhaps stiffer in their joints after their endless stairs.

'Ye can tell when the tide's oot at Kirkcaldy,' was the first thing said to me by a woman who showed me her dingy garret in Milne's Court, and I found that the windows, which gave so much pleasure to those who looked up at them, gave even greater satisfaction to those who looked out of them. 'At nicht ye hae Buckie, the Wemyss, and the Fife shore to the East Neuk.' She was from Fife herself. A little old woman, who lived all alone in a stuffy room crammed full of ancient fur-



THE OLD TOWN RIDGE

niture, some of which would have done credit to the original tenants, told me that it was the lighthouse she liked best, blinking away down there in the Firth. It was fine company at night. She was a lonely, suspicious old lady and none of the neighbours knew her. She 'keepit hersel' to hersel',' never took part in the clash on the stairs, and never had a visitor. Hers would be one of the windows that always lit up at night for the people in Princes Street, and her wrinkled face would look out over our heads to Inchkeith Light on the Firth winking up at her with slow jocosity.

In the life of many of these tenants the view played a real part; it was like a garden to their houses, and thought of as something they possessed. The Highland soldiers marching in Princes Street, the sun shining on the golden dome in Charlotte Square, the Fife hills in snow, were to them as the advent of flowers in their season. In my visits I always tried to lead the talk to this subject; usually a glance at the window would bring a burst of appreciation. 'Ye wouldna find mony views like that,' or, 'Aye, it's worth lookin' at. If it wasna for thae 'presses and yon view, it's somewhere else I wad be – no' here.' One Highland woman in the Canongate, it is true, told me that though she had been ten years in her two-room house, she had never become used to working with the washing at the window. It still made her that dizzy, looking down from the eighth floor. Before she came to Edinburgh she had never been farther off the ground than she could jump. Here the height was awful! She was one of the few exceptions, the others being mainly the better-off people who lived in three-room houses, and had little tables at the windows with india-rubber plants in pots upon them. The

world outside, which appeared so fine and wonderful from these eyries, was as another room to most of the dwellers. A soldier's wife in Cannon Ball House in Castlehill, told me that she spent half the day at her window (nevertheless, her floor and fireplace and brasswork were as bright as any in Edinburgh), and she didn't know what she would do when she was moved.

And it is pleasant to know that while the disinherited folk in the Old Town love their splendid windows, comfortable people far away on the Fife coast count it among their blessings that they can see Auld Reekie. A curious instance of this appeared a few years ago in the Law Courts, when a gentleman on an estate near Dunfermline brought an action against his neighbour, whose trees were shutting out his view of Edinburgh. He won his case, proving that for two hundred years his ancestors had had this right of servitude over the other estate. One likes to think of this Fifan laird, with his taste for the good things of life, watching from his lawn in summer the distant city rising in its airy grace over the green slopes of Midlothian, and of the soldier's wife looking down out of her ancient window over the lively streets of the New Town and the grey-blue waters of the Firth, glancing perhaps towards the woods and the habitation where the laird was sitting.

CHAPTER III

INTERIORS WITH FIGURES

IF THE WINDOWS OF THE TALL OLD TOWN AWAKEN ONE'S curiosity in the dwellers there, whose lights so enrich the beauty of the Edinburgh night, there is as strong an appeal in the thought of the habitations themselves. Like most visitors to Edinburgh, I had often gazed up at the *lands* as I passed through the streets and wondered what was inside those curtainless windows, what faced those ungirthed matrons and maidens I saw at the windows when they turned to attend to their household duties. Where did the little white-skulled boys, nursing babies in the dark entries under sculptured coats of arms, go when they left the entries empty? Did they go into the ordinary hard little cubicle of the poor man's house, or was theirs really a romantic dwelling, rich in old panelling behind the grime? Did a half-ruined ceiling of antique figuring catch the lights of their halfpenny dip? Perhaps the whole domicile was inside a lord's chimney-piece, – a sight, as Chambers has told us, which could be seen after the Great Flitting, when the gentry had evacuated the Old Town and given up the keys to the Armies of Poverty.

Every one knows that in these ancient houses the great folk of Scotland lived when Edinburgh was indeed a capital, and 150 lords and 160 Members of Parliament, with their families and followers, were crowded into the closes and courts when Parliament was sitting. In the early part of the nineteenth century, a man who may have spoken with the fathers of citizens still living, could remember when the Canongate housed 2 dukes, 16 earls, 7 lords and 7 lords of session, 13

baronets, 3 commanders-in-chief, to say nothing of a boarding-school for young ladies. Often when looking at the huddle of nondescript furniture that congregates on the pavement outside the brokers' shops in that *faubourg*, I recalled how Robert Chambers knew a lady in whose youth parties of young people were convened to go to see the braw flittings in the Canongate. They would sit for hours at the window of some friend on the opposite side of the way, while cart after cart was ladened with magnificence. Chambers, writing in the 'twenties, describes the Canongate houses as still fit for the residence of a first-class family in all but vicinage and access. One wanted to know if this was still the case. It seemed unlikely.

The first flood of poor tenants had been succeeded by tenants still poorer, and a century had passed since the great folk left the Old Town. Even in Chambers's day the burgh of Canongate had become a secluded and meanly-inhabited suburb, 'only accessible by ways which were hardly then pervious to a lady and gentleman without shocking more of the senses than one, besides the difficulty of steering one's way through the herds of the idle and the wretched who encumbered the street.' Could anything elegant and curious have survived such a submersion? The drunken violence of the Irish navvy and the Highland labourer, the carelessness of a class driven here and there by gusts of casual employment, to whom a house is only a cave for the night, and who see a loose carved stairpost or painted panel as fuel sent by Providence to man – these were not all the factors of destruction. There were the many needy proprietors through whose hands the buildings have passed, and in recent times appeared the scouts of the antique furniture-dealers, who,

during the Adamic craze, were hunting the country for chimney-pieces, and stopped at nothing to get a specimen from Adam's own town. And the hunt is still up. Fire has harried Edinburgh of a few of her old buildings, and modern changes have been paid for by a heavy lawing of the best. Bailie MacMorran's house, Croft-an-Righ, and Moray House (whose wonderfully rich coved ceilings are curiously little known to the citizens) have been saved by the efforts of that noble body, the Cockburn Association, and their extraordinary interiors give us a taste of the banquet which Old Edinburgh must once have offered to those who care for antiquity and beauty. Two other houses are mentioned in modern books as possessing interesting features of their patrician past, but there are, so far as I could learn, no accessible particulars about the rest. Yet people take it for granted that within the many old buildings whose rough-hewn faces still front the ancient streets and wynds, there still are remarkable things to be seen if one has time and opportunity to search for them.

In the course of my explorations – if one may use so big a word for so unplanned and cursory a business – I saw something of what remains inside the old *lands*, and from elderly people who had been tenants in buildings long since swept away, I heard of a good deal more.

My chief memories of these visits are of darkness, grime and strange smells, of a friendly communal mode of living, and of hordes and hordes of children pattering down great stone stairs in dim light. Of long passages leading to inner and still darker stairs up which one went endlessly, looking down, perhaps, through staircase panes of bottle-end glass on lower roofs where

grass and moss grew on the crowsteps of the gables. Of bruising one's hand hammering on doors corrugated with age, and thick as the 'oaks' in an Oxford college, behind which the tenant could sit snugly, hearing nothing less than a pistol-shot. The doors seemed appropriate to buildings of such tremendous massiveness. The houses behind the High Street, built on the slope to the south, are like castles by the sea, designed to withstand the shattering fury of the ocean as well as the onslaughts of man and time. The owner of Bishop Bothwell's house in Byres Close told me that his workmen had to cut through a house wall nearly six feet thick, and most of the houses that face the Lawnmarket have a defence of four feet of solid stone. The wind had indeed to be fierce to vex the thoughts of the dwellers in these mighty habitations. There was much silence in the very old houses. Sometimes only two or three of the floors were occupied; in a few the *land* stood dark and empty, many of the windows broken, and the dust inches deep in the ghostly rooms; the only sound the scamper of rats behind the panelling, and even that was like a whisper on the soft, thick, sooty dust. Every close seemed to have at least one condemned house. Once when I was in the attics of an old house over a brazier's workshop in Advocate's Close, a slate fell through the broken roof as the wind slammed the door behind me. It dropped on the sooty floor with hardly a sound; starting a vision of these tall old houses slowly and noiselessly dismembering like trees in autumn – of Edinburgh waking up one fine morning to find the Old Town a ghastly forest of stark gables with the wind blowing between.

Yet the destruction is fairly slow. There is a charming old

mahogany stair-rail, for instance, in a fore-stair in a miserable part of the Cowgate, that has lost only a few of its shapely balusters, and in one dim old turnpike I came upon a beautiful knocker of Adam's period, its very unusual design still apparent under the dingy paint. A bacchante's head, with tossing locks decoratively twined, formed the crown of the ring supporting a nice ribbon design enclosing a little name-plate. One wondered what name had been there when the knocker was new and bright. It is on a strong door to a flat of five rooms, each of which now contains a household. The rooms all have good mantels in which the twined thistle and rose ornament is prominent. Altogether I saw seven interesting old knockers, all of them encrusted with old paint and grime. In different parts of the town I came on pieces of old Scots ironwork, in long spear-headed hinges, strengthenings of doors, and several antique bolts and staples.

The staircases were a disappointment to anyone acquainted with the rich examples of carved consoles and spiral balusters still to be found in many of the decayed houses in Soho, the Adelphi, Laurence Pountney Hill, and elsewhere in London. The stone turnpike stair, so characteristic of Edinburgh, gave no opportunity for decoration, a crest, or initials, or a godly text over the lintel of the entrance being the only suggestion of other thoughts than usefulness. In Milne's Court and some of the High Street closes below the Tron, where the turnpike has given place to stairways of straight flights lit by a rectangular double window on every second landing, stand Doric columns, now battered, greasy, and loosely articulated (like the slimy columns on the Giant's Causeway when the tide is

out), but still serving as memorials how the Renaissance style, first grafted on Regent Moray's Gateway in the Castle, then in full flower in 'Heriot's Wark,' came into the ordinary domestic architecture of Edinburgh. In Chessel's Court there is a characteristic stone turnpike, not a newel, with a stone dado rail and a mahogany balustrade, and a very spacious landing with windows widely splayed. Haddington House, at the Cowgate end of a Canongate close, has a wide ponderous stair with mahogany balusters, but to see a characteristic Scots staircase of any distinction you have to go outside the city. One of the best is in Royston House, near Wardie, a very interesting seventeenth-century mansion, now the office of a sensible ink manufacturer.

There is a good reason why the Old Edinburgh builders did not trouble to ornament the stairs. Except in a very few of the old *lands*, the turnpike stairs are always in semi-darkness. In some of the upper parts, where the small windows are encrusted with dirt, you cannot see a man until he almost touches you, and so you have to make your course by dead-reckoning and by sound. What it must have been in the old days of private feud, when God knows who might be waiting quietly for you at the stair-turn, a modern brain cannot conceive. Of what it was like in the late eighteenth century, Smollett's descriptions give an unsavoury idea. The citizens' nerves, like their noses, must have been less assailable than ours. Some social philosophers tell us that the killer in the *abattoir*, with his knife and stained blouse and untroubled mind, gives us the best modern equivalent to the barons of mediæval times. It is just as likely that a quiet, middle-aged shuffling woman with a shawl over

UPPER GREENSIDE LANE

her head, whom I visited at the top of a Canongate close, had a great deal in common with the gentlewoman of Old Edinburgh who had to pass through a zone of rough tenants at the bottom of her stair, and was passed herself by the hardy denizens who lived in the attic stories.

In her stair it was dark at all hours. Many of its tenants were tramps and rough folk who smashed in the doors of the empty houses and took shelter for the night. There were always rows on the stairs, and the police were often in and out. Cries and appeals and threats were common noises in the darkness. Nobody knew who had the next room – at any rate, my elderly tenant didn't, and didn't want to . . . bad characters every one. 'I meet them often,' she said, 'on the stairs, but I've never seen yin o' them. It's aye black dark there – black as the Earl o' Hell's waistcoat. But I come and go, late and early, and nobody ever put a hand to me.' She had no fear, but considerable power of description. Her account of the noises would set most people's nerves to jangle; the incessant abuse and taunts and cursing, the scraping and stumbling of heavy boots and the blows and panting of combatants – and all this in the darkness, though it was bright morning in the street outside. It must have seemed as if the incorrigible ghosts of the old building were imprisoned in it till its stone and lime should be dissolved.

The evil spirits of to-day, however, need little reinforcement from ghosts of Old Edinburgh. They are potent enough. An official, who had much to do with the Cowgate district, told me how he had once talked to a man who had had his ear bitten off in a fight, but when he spoke of the bestiality of the being

who had done it, to his astonishment the victim began to make excuses and to show the inside view of the matter. 'Aweel!' he had concluded, 'when the drink's in ye an' ye're at a fecht, ye forget everything, and jest try to get on as best ye can.'

It is so difficult to get the inside view of these things. A sort of parallel to this is given in a book called *The Memories of the Somervilles*, of a tulzie in 1596, when one Johnson of Westerhall attacked his enemy Braid Hugh Somerville of the Writes by coming at him 'with his sword drawen and with the opening of his mouth, crying "Turn, villane," he cuttes Writes on the hint-head a deep and sore wound, the foullest stroak,' continues the unprejudiced *Memories*, 'that ever Westerhall was knoune to give, acknowledged soe and much regrated afterwards by himself.'

Chimney-pieces naturally make a peculiar appeal to a northern people. In Scotland for eight months of the year the main interest of a room is the fire, and attention is focussed on it and its setting. There is, of course, the window, but, despite the splendid views from Edinburgh windows, people must always have turned most of the time to the fire and left the windows rattling at their backs. In many cases a compromise seems to have been arranged between the two attractions, for it cannot be without significance that only in old Scots architecture do you find the fireplace in the middle of the gable with a window on either side. Of course, there is also a constructional reason for the peculiarity, but the fact remains that in this way the Edinburgh citizen could at once sit at his fire and look out of his window. There are still many panelled little rooms in the Old Town with this attraction, and their appearance suggests

the gift for getting the best of both worlds that has often been mentioned as one of the most valuable attributes of the Scot.

But the nights of the long winter would give the home its most cherished associations, and these would centre round the fireplace. In the domestic poetry of the country some of the most affecting passages are wrought through the image of a cold hearth:

'Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold;
Lone let it stand now the friends are all departed,
The kind hearts, the true hearts, that loved the place of old.'

More perhaps than in any other country do you find that in the household of the ordinary citizen the chimney-piece is the great embellishment of the room. In Craig's Close they are like holy ikons. The taste and skill of the old Edinburgh craftsman have been exhausted in its service, and it is not without significance that the brothers Adam, whose designs for interiors led the London fashion in the eighteenth century and brought the embellished mantelpiece into quite a modest class of house, were Edinburgh men. Just as they introduced to London the Scots style of assembling a number of habitations in one building with a common feature of entablature and exterior decoration, as though the whole were one great mansion – compare the east side of Fitzroy Square or Adelphi Terrace with the range of separate dwellings that make up St. James's Square and old Curzon Street – so their harmonious and urbane mantels soon took the place of the heavily-moulded chimney-pieces of the previous generation which did not fit well with the pretty hob-grates, designed by the Adams and their followers, that

were then becoming the rage of the period. I soon found that the chief feature of the houses in the Old Town was the mantelpieces, of which a surprising number have survived the dangers and neglect to which they have been exposed for more than a century.

Twenty years ago there seem to have been three times as many, but in the interval the craze for eighteenth-century work has set in severely and the landlords have disposed of the best, while the old curiosity dealers have made captures on their own account. It is, of course, pleasant to think that these seemly pieces of eighteenth-century design and craftsmanship have been removed to places where they will be carefully preserved, but one cannot see without regret the passing of such relics from the one place where they have significance, and where (as I discovered) they often give a genuine pleasure to lives that are stripped very bare. So eager are some of the more unscrupulous dealers to acquire these mantelpieces that they deal directly with the tenant, who in nearly every case has no right to sell. Many of the landlords, moreover, do not appreciate their value, and so day by day the mantelpieces disappear. In one house I was told by the tenant that she had been offered £8 for hers, but as it was not her property she had refused to let the agent cut it out. Many tenants, I believe, take the other course.

In the different *lands* you can trace the various stages in the development of the Edinburgh chimney-piece from the sixteenth century onwards. Only one of the decorated Gothic examples with clustered pillars, of which several were known to Sir Daniel Wilson, remains in its place. It is in Blackfriars

Street, in the ancient house with the narrow stair-turret, and, over the entrance, a shield supported by unicorns, to bear out the story that the wicked Regent Morton lived there. In Milne's Court, which was a town improvement of 1690, you find the square opening with a simple, deeply-moulded roll of a late Gothic character – a moulding which builders used in the entries to common stairs until well into the eighteenth century – surrounded by a wooden frame ornamented with shells and anchors. Most probably the wooden frame was placed there at the time the brazier was superseded by the hob-grate. One stone moulding has a well-carved oak surround, with a centre keystone panel showing four cupids bearing torches and an offering, which the tenant describes as 'four weans wi' a coffin.' In some rooms, which by their stone floors seem to have been kitchens, the stone chimney-pieces remain untouched. The next step in development was, apparently, the use of an inset of marble instead of stone, and many pretty pieces of marble can be seen – veined yellow or veined green, plain bluish-grey, white and black. The insets are usually incised in the shape of panels with a centre one on the top like a keystone, and long panels forming shoulders and running half-way down the jambs, with a pretty little reed round the inside. In many cases the marble is encrusted with grime and other foreign substances and is only recognizable on close scrutiny.

The wooden mantelpieces display the ingenious but rather undisciplined fancy of the old craftsman, though here and there a chaste design of the Adam family or their disciples strikes a harmonious classical note. A few pieces with birds and flowers

have their counterparts in Charlotte Square, where some of the mantels have a naturalistic tendency not usually associated with the Adams. A favourite device is the twined rose and thistle, indicating an advanced date in the eighteenth century, for few Scots builders would have had the temerity to remind their clients of the 'waefu' Union' until well after the 'Forty-Five.' Flying birds, birds in nests, sheaves of corn, carnations, vine leaves, fruit in baskets heavily undercut (this is common in John Street, which was built about 1768), and shells and anchors, are common symbols. In Lord Haddington's house, which stands in a close between the Canongate and Cowgate, there is a panel, elaborately modelled in composition, of a hunter with a dog, and a church in the distance, and in a house in New Street is another showing Calton Hill and the Nelson Monument, but no Parthenon, these marking the final decadence of the tradition, when design had vanished in imitative craftsmanship.

If none of the classical designs are quite masterpieces of the Adams, and a great number of them have grown corpulent through successive coats of grime and paint, there is yet no denying their charm. The urn on the corner and centre, connected by festoons or ribbons, which also fall down the jambs, was a favourite device. The Doric triglyph was used a good deal, and medallions, or classical figures, or a winged lion, were sometimes introduced. There is also a rather pretty criss-cross pattern like a Chinese Chippendale conceit. In Craig's Close, which bears on the entrance lintel the date 1744, and initials that are believed to connect the building with the Constable family, are some of the most elaborate interiors in all

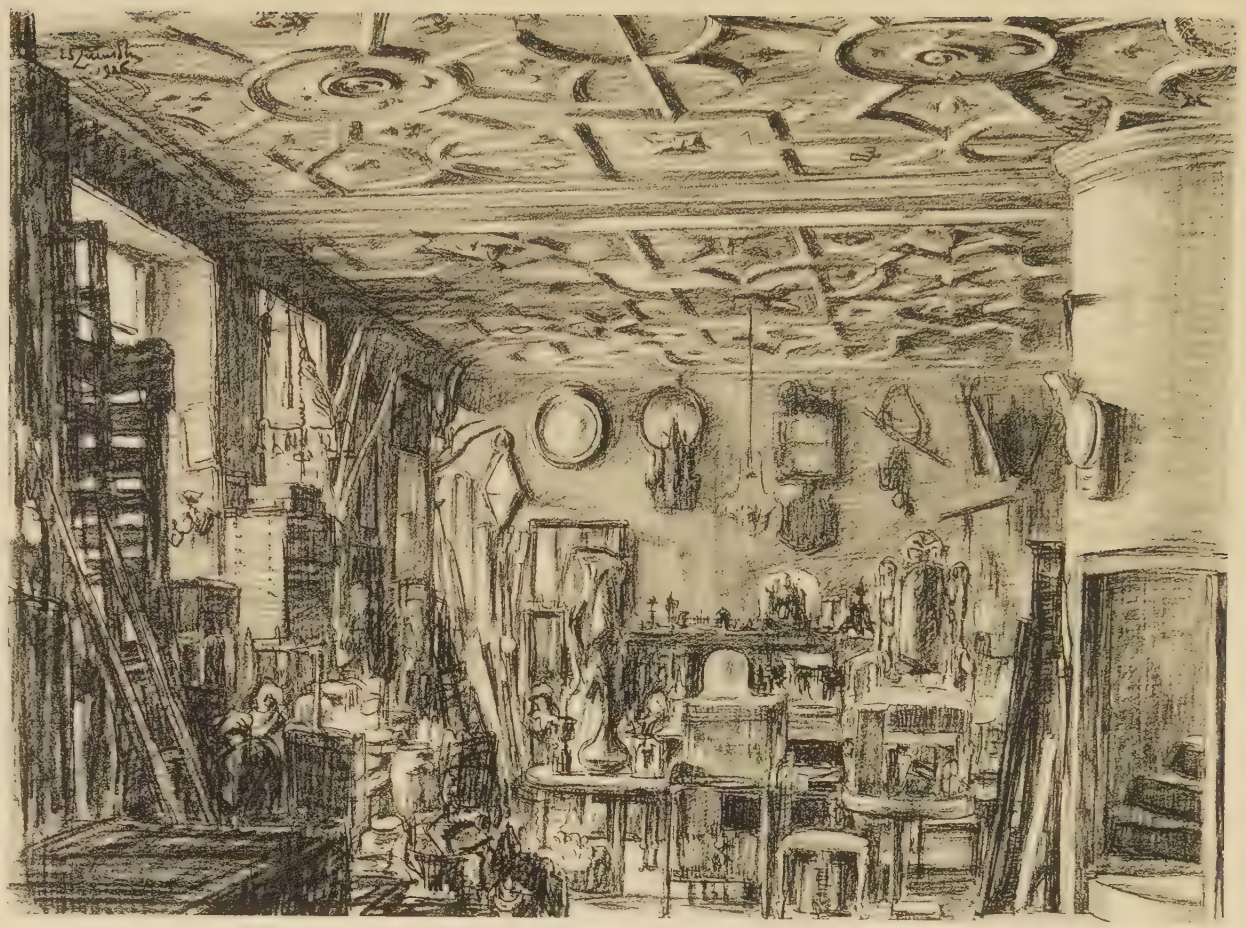
the Old Town *lands*. On the top storey there is a large lofty room about twenty-five feet square with windows on either side of the elaborate chimney-piece, a coved plaster ceiling, heavy wooden cornice, and walls decorated with Ionic pilasters and arches in plaster forming a sort of arcade all round it. The mantel is of marble with an egg and tongue ornament, and over it is a niche surmounted by a broken pediment supported on pilasters heavily decorated with shells and festoons in plaster. In this grand room, that must once have been a centre of Old Edinburgh gentility, a workman and his wife with many children live. Outside the door is a dingy little official ticket telling the number of feet of cubic space in the room and the number of human beings that may safely be housed in it.

The room immediately below it has an even grander chimney-piece, the mantelpiece of bluish-grey marble prettily curved with a head carved on the keystone, and the overmantel, which is very heavily decorated, has a classical head in high relief that the *land* calls 'Lady Craig's head, her that stoppet here,' and in the broken pediment above, a basket of gorgeous plaster flowers bloom eternally, the feature being completed by a disdainful classical head projecting from the wall at each side and finished with a falling festoon. On the other side of the room is a large recess in the shape of a shell. Both these rooms are handsomely panelled, and the tenants are decent, kindly people, who take a pride in their grand rooms and deserve to live in them.

Queen Mary, who brought the first glass mirror to Scotland – it hangs tarnished and worn now in her bedroom in Holyrood –

also brought from France the first iron dog-grates that superseded the open hearth – a fashion which, after three hundred years, is back again as the newest thing. The hob-grate, with its hospitable shape and happy decoration, ought to have arrived with Prince Charlie, but all we know is that it was in common use about the middle of the eighteenth century. When an improvement appears in the system of firing it comes with a rush, for it means economy as well as novelty, and the hob-grate seems at once to have spread over Edinburgh, the old fireplaces being altered to suit. To-day you will find that the mantelpieces put in at the time still stand, or have been replaced within the last fifty years by very poor substitutes. Until the middle of the nineteenth century little alteration seems to have been made in that part of the Old Edinburgh houses. A few open grates remain, but the fire-dogs have all gone. Old inhabitants told me of the Dutch tiles with blue figures, that could be seen in the Cannon Ball House in Castlehill, and in Gladstone's *land* in the Lawnmarket, but all have gone now. There are still, however, a good number of hob-grates, some of the pretty Adam type, in good preservation.

Apart from the show-places, very few good ceilings have survived. A fragment of Gothic wood-ceiling, with carved ribs and a battered pendant, can be seen in an inner stair-turret (where the tenant keeps her coal) in Nisbet of Dirleton's house in the Canongate, and there are a few other examples of the kind. Bailie MacMorran's old mansion, in a tiny court behind the Lawnmarket, where James VI and his Queen were banqueted in 1598, has an elaborate ceiling illustrated in Mac-Gibbon and Ross's book, but that very interesting building is



A ROOM IN BRODIE'S CLOSE

occupied as a social settlement and is already something of a show-place.

Then, there is the ceiling of Roman Eagle Hall in Brodie's Close, now a curiosity dealer's store where old silverware, pewter, court-swords, Venetian glass, and a thousand knick-knacks, lie about in indescribable confusion, as though the famous Deacon had just disappeared after an exceptionally busy week's burgling. The ceiling is an excellent piece of plaster-work of Charles I's time.

A house, entered by an outside stair in the first square of Riddle's Court, has a large room with a ceiling bearing the date 1678 and a crown with thistles and roses, all within a heavily-moulded circle, the rest of the ceiling being in compartments showing the Scots lion *rampant*, and the English lion *statant gardant*. This was the residence of a Provost of Edinburgh who conveyed the loyal assurance of the nation to Charles II at Breda, and also, what was less welcome, the Covenant to be 'subscribit by his Majestie.' Professor Pillans, who occupied the Chair of Humanity in Edinburgh University till 1860, was born and bred in this house, which a generation ago contained many panels decorated by Norie. These panels have been removed, but the room (full of drying clothes at the time of my visit) is in good preservation, and provides a home for a busy woman and several children, over whose heads the plaster lions ramp and tear. A ceiling in Croft-an-Righ House, where the gardener of Holyrood lives, shows much the same characteristics, and these ceilings, and the fine coved specimens with pendants in Moray House and a ceiling in Mowbray House, are all believed to have been

wrought by foreign workmen. Several rough examples of early Scots plaster-work can be found in the High Street and Lawnmarket, but I came on nothing of distinction.

A number of painted panels remain. Castlehill and the Lawnmarket have some that are interesting enough in their place but would be valueless elsewhere. One, which shows a warehouse and a crane on a quay and shipping in a harbour, might be a view of a particularly featureless piece of Leith or Hamburg. One wonders why the dead tenant had it painted. It was easier to see why another panel has the Bass Rock, and a view of yellow hills and water. That flat had an iron-studded door to protect these treasures, although the rent before the War was only two shillings and ninepence a week for each room. In a very quaint little house in Reid's Close, with a little enclosed garden in front, and a tiny front gable with a dovecot hole, there is a room with a landscape on nearly every panel, but the work is not contemporary with the building, and suggests that, sometime in the early nineteenth century, an artist had lived in the room and amused himself by painting, quite cleverly, a number of ideal landscapes. The best examples are in Chessel's Court, where the principal suite of rooms has fortunately fallen into the hands of a Church Kindergarten, one of the pleasantest centres of civilization in the Canongate. These rooms overlook and open into a piece of the old garden, with a wooden bench and a stunted old apple-tree, to remind you of the old *faubourg* character of the Canongate. Here there are two good landscape panels and a plaster coat of arms over the fireplace. Many painted panels survive in other parts of the building. The rooms are richly, if not very tastefully,

decorated with elaborate groups of symbols, such as horns of plenty, open books, masques, heavy festoons of flowers, shells and scrolls worked in plaster on the chimney-pieces and in recesses. Most of them are panelled to the ceilings, and the interior doorways have carved heads with the 'cushion' moulding, and a coronet or a symbol over the pediment. This is the best preserved and most characteristic example of an eighteenth-century Edinburgh mansion that I saw in the Old Town. It is not clear who built it and how it was originally occupied. Of the Chessels themselves evidence is found in a document dated 1765. In 1788 it was used as the Excise Office, and had the honour to be burgled by Deacon Brodie and his associates.

St. John Street still offers a dozen examples where you could study the class of house in which the greater gentry of the town settled, when Edinburgh made its first organized effort to escape from the *lands*. These three-storey houses, many of which still exist, are handsomely equipped. Lord Monboddo's drawing-room has two fluted columns supporting a cornice that screens off the back part of the room. The kitchen is impressively hospitable, with a special fireplace for hot plates, and box-beds for guests overtaken by his hospitality. These houses have much the same features as the still genteel George Square houses, which were the next housing experiment, but many of the latter have charming refinements of the Adam period.

These rough notes are not likely to be of any use to the professional, but to the lay reader they may convey an idea of the curious submerged world of old gentility and seemliness that lies behind the rough-hewn walls of these poverty-stricken

lands. Many better examples of chimney-pieces, ceiling, panelling and carving possibly exist in the parts that I did not explore, but from the varied area in which I made my visits, I think the pieces mentioned are fairly typical of the whole.

II

Thinking over my experiences, I find it much more difficult to say what is typical in the attitude of the tenants towards these relics among which they spend their lives. What did they think of it all? It was not a question that I could very well ask, or that the tenants could easily answer. Nowadays, it is generally accepted among directors of art galleries that only a small minority in any class really care about art. A certain proportion of mankind do find their refreshment and solace there, but they are not confined to a class. With the poor the number must be smallest, lacking as they do possessions to stimulate their dormant interest and opportunity to identify their pleasures, while if a rich man shows no taste for art the chances are that he has no such taste. But people are apt to forget that love of art does not necessarily go with a liberal education, and that it can exist without it. Among the well-to-do, there is a general opinion that the poor may be taught to appreciate things of beauty, but few believe that they would by themselves find any first-hand pleasure in them. In discussing the probable attitude of the tenants in the Old Town towards the relics of ancient harmony and fineness that remain in these fallen quarters, I found a not uncommon opinion that they would not care a button. One elderly gentleman said that they didn't care what the room was like so long as they could sleep till they were sober.

In the course of my searches through the *lands* I found several instances of wanton destruction and disfigurement through ignorance, and of selling (without permission of the landlord) something that should never have been torn from its place. But one must preserve one's sense of balance. After all, if a drunken Highland navvy did smash a beautiful Adamic mantelpiece in James's Court, one must remember that only some sixty years ago the learned College of Winchester had the precious mediæval brasses torn from the chapel floor, and left to rot in a cellar or to disappear without inquiry. And if an orange-woman in Milne's Court painted her marble chimney-piece in patriotic colours, did not George IV sell the Chippendale furniture at Windsor to replace it with examples of nineteenth-century Gothic; and have not gentlemen, prosperous enough to live in Charlotte Square, deformed their houses with excrescences that ruin their proportions, and so worked destruction on one of the most delightful things in Europe? Barbarities, I found, were not wanting in the *lands*; an old seascape on a panel had nails driven into it, on which foolish little brass ornaments were hung; a finely-carved mantelpiece had been cut up to give space for a drying apparatus; a lofty cupboard (like those in the Stuart house in Essex Court, Middle Temple) with arched keystone top and handsome carved shelves, had been deformed into a coal-cellar. Many seemly Georgian interior fanlights had been broken and atrociously repaired, and one of the few remaining seventeenth-century plaster ceilings had been mutilated. Yet these seemed but little insults to Apollo when one remembered that, save for the combined opposition of London architects, the London County

Council would have destroyed that lovely piece of eighteenth-century proportion and detail, the Church of St. Mary-le-Strand, and that by the erection of an electric power station at Greenwich they have thrown the great Hospital out of scale and ruined one of the grandest sights in Europe; and that in Edinburgh's great era of culture the beautiful Norman gateway of St. Giles had been broken up to save the cost of repair! In no case did I find that any of the figures of the old chimney-pieces or panels had been insulted in a common way or by other attempt at gutter-humour. Whatever wrong had been done, was done through ignorance or a mistaken idea about decoration, as when Union Jacks had been painted on classical urns.

A tall, bony, middle-aged woman, with tight, greyish hair and a lean, eager face, who seemed trained and stripped for her fight with poverty, and unlikely to have a thought to give between the rounds to the things in the arena where she was fighting, became beautiful in her animation and in the gestures of her lean arms, as she tried to tell me about the glories of her old house in Carrubber's Close. 'Talk about chimney-pieces,' she cried; 'it was the nicest, sweetest thing ever ye saw: lovely bunches o' grapes, a' carved like real, and fruit in baskets and floo'ers a' growin' aboot. Oh my, it was a bonny place to be in! And the ceiling was a' floo'ered – raised floo'ers – a' standin' oot. It was sae high you had to stand on a chair wi' a cloth on a brush to clean it. It belangt to a lord at ae time – Lord Elphinstone. Noo it's awa' and there'll never be anither like it. Ye should hae seen it at nicht when the room was red up an' the fire shinin' on the floo'ers and grapes! I used to buy bees-

wax for the mantel, and aye spent a guid twa hours on it on Saturday daein' it up. It was bonny – bonny to be in a hoose like that. It was that.'

On the faces of a few of the other women in the *lands*, the same look came when they talked about the decorations of their houses or of their former homes, but none were so lyrical as this woman. She was not merely telling me of these things; she was trying to make me feel how fine they had been to her. Yet her face looked as though it had known hunger, and her present house had nothing one would call comfort. It was bare as it was clean. With her and one or two others, the pleasure they had told me of impressed me as being distinctly the same kind of pure pleasure that a picture-lover has before a masterpiece in the National Gallery. It seemed to have nothing to do with possession. She lamented the loss of her beautiful room as one might lament the departure of the Lansdowne Rembrandt. With a very much larger class their pleasure in the elegant relics that remained in their houses was, of course, chiefly the satisfaction of possessing an uncommon thing; in short, the ordinary pleasure of the art-collector.

In some of the *lands* I found a general pride (not always justified) among all the denizens of the stair in the decorations of a particular house, and they would enthusiastically recommend a visit, and even accompany me, the mob increasing at every floor until the door was reached, and sometimes if the tenant in question urged a more than adequate reason why the visit should be postponed, the stair brushed it aside, and somehow I found myself in the middle of the room long before my manners. It ought to be added that the popularity of my

cicerone accounted for this warm intercession on our behalf, but there was no mistaking the common pride in certain mantelpieces, alcoves, panels and ceilings. To live with them, although it had such penalties as intrusions of neighbours and their friends, certainly conferred distinction.

Sometimes the tenant had, besides possession, the pleasure of discovery. The wife of a sweep in a *land* behind the High Street told me, with many details, how the mantelpiece I admired so much had been summoned by her husband out of a shapeless clod of paint and dirt. She was very proud of him and of it. 'It was funny,' she said, 'the way it cam' about, for naebody had ever ta'en it into their heid that there was a beautiful carved piece o' wark there like thon. He was sittin' at the fire ae nicht cuttin' his tobacco wi' 's knife, and something – he doesna ken himsel' what it was – but it attrakit him, and he began to pike awa' wi' 's knife that he was cuttin' the tobacco wi'. You wouldna hae ken't the mantel then. It was a' cloggit up wi' paint and varnish and dirt and stuff, and it was flat as a board – naebody would hae ken't there was a bit o' wark on't. Weel, here's him pykin' awa' and pykin' awa', and says he, "What's this?" An' if he hadna pykit oot that bird! There it was wi' its wings fleein', and the rest o' the mantel jist black – black, and naething to be seen. Eh, wi' that he yokit tae't, and he howkit awa', an' he cam' to the nest wi' th' ither yin in't – here 't is – an' then the floo'ers, and then we was aye wond'rin' what was comin' next. He couldna hae been mair careful, no' if it had been the "Lord Provost's lum," says he.' She told me, too, how he had stoppet in at nights and had went on at the howking with

his tobacco-knife, how a neighbour who was a painter had telled him about burning off the old material, and how after the burning he had rubbed it with beeswax till it was just awful nice. And nice indeed it was, with its elegant urns at the corners and twined rose and thistle on the jambs. And so the sweep and his wife, high up in the ancient *land*, had pursued their discoveries and found under the common black-leaded crust the quaint conceits of the old designer, the sign of the polite life of the Edinburgh of the eighteenth century, when the Rose and the Thistle had been joined together.

This was not an isolated instance. Many times I found that when a tenant of superior taste and activity had cleared away the thick deposit of years and revealed an interesting ornament, the whole *land* had gradually awakened to the idea that such treasures might stand hidden in their own dwellings, and so had taken with some purpose to cleaning and scraping. Many of the tenants had been rewarded by finding orange and green-veined marble insets beneath loads of paint and black-lead, and had made some capital pieces of restoration. But, naturally enough, the restorations were not always happy. The tenant who had enriched his newly-reclaimed mantelpiece by picking out the design of a dolphin and shells and festoons, in blue, green and yellow, certainly laid himself open to the reproach that he had misinterpreted the conception of the old designer – still, that is the common fate of restorers. Certainly Sir Gilbert Scott did not escape it.

But, after all, the most vivid impressions I retain of these strange old places are of interiors without figures. Here is a memory that often comes back to me. The landlady of a

temperance hotel, whose little outside stair and shallow bow-windows front the High Street – an inn which in other days had welcomed many a traveller by the London coach with a noggin of something very hot – showed me an old property behind her establishment that she had just bought. We mounted the dark turnpike of five flights, and came to a door, hastily put together and secured in place of the battered piece of oak which lay behind it. Bad characters, it seemed, had broken in. The flat had been of some pretensions once, for though the rooms were small, the two largest, I noticed, were connected by an ornamental wooden arch on Ionic columns. A few walls of neat panelling remained, and one fireplace, which was of stone carved with the pleasant Scots roll moulding, had defied the worst that chance tenants could do. We could trace the old stone-flagged kitchen, the corridor, which in itself had recently housed a family, the bedrooms and the living-rooms. Indescribable rubbish was collected on some of the floors, and the ceilings had been broken. A bottle with candle-grease about it, and a child's torn shoe, and a couple of hairpins fastening a swathe of wall-paper, were all the visible signs of habitation that remained. In the pallid light that filtered through the small dingy window-panes, the place had a look that was almost horrible. It was like a desecrated grave – the coldness and shadows and corruption, the impregnable stones, and the grey light stealing in like a thief through the deep window bays, fingering the shattered chimney-piece, lingering in the many-membered cornice, and stamping the grey squares of the windows on the dusty floor. Historic castles and great mansions fallen to ruin are sad with memories of irremediable deeds and the vanity of human

grandeurs; but in the intimacy of these small empty rooms, once so crowded with seemly and hearty life, now cold and rifled and degraded, there was something that struck a chill to the heart.

CHAPTER IV

GRACE O' LIFE

'AYE, I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN – GRACE O' LIFE AND THAT sort o' thing. No – no – we don't go in for grace o' life in Peterdeen.'

It was the close of a dreary argument – heaven knows how it started – and we had reached at last a point and a declaration. In this world, and more particularly in Peterdeen, man lived by bread alone and the hope of something better in the next, and had no time to be bothered with fancy work that he would be best without, although there might be some folk who had nothing better to do. My friend believed in things in their right place: money in the bank, pictures in picture-galleries, and common sense in all things.

The argument was over a long time ago, but his phrase about grace o' life often came back to me in the course of my wanderings in the old *lands*. Here, surely, was a place where there was no room for it. Was it possible that any of the things that made this grace, still lingering in these decayed houses, could mean something to the hearts of the slum folk who lived in them in our days? I have given a few instances of the relics that still survive, and how some of them do excite a share of the pleasure which they brought to the original owner, as an essence may remain for others in an old cracked rose-bowl lying in an ash-heap. There was one place especially where life, bruised and starved though it seemed, still put forth a grace and a fragrance.

It was in an old house entered by an outside stair in the wing of a building built of rough stone with dressings round the windows and doorways. The building stood at the foot of a lean

dingy court, which added to its isolated and forgotten appearance, as one had time to feel its influence in the approach through the street archway, down the court and through the thin little iron-arched gate in the broken and neglected palisadoes which still showed a few elegant iron urns on the tall rusted posts. The iron rail on the outside stair had lost some of its supports, and the hard stone steps were worn to the shape of a cow's back by the footsteps of generations dead and gone. The whole building had been a grandee's mansion in its early days, and his arms could still be seen in one of the chimney-pieces in a room in the centre part. It had never been an imposing or beautiful piece of architecture, but even now it had a look of old-fashioned Scots pride and solid gentrice.

The room I visited was on the second floor. It was lofty and of fair size, with two tall windows that gave a view of Salisbury Crags on which the winter sun was sending its last rays. The walls were panelled to the roof in dark, solid style, and the architraves of the door and heavy wooden shutters had a carved beading. The mantelpiece was of dark oak, carved in a massive pattern in which a sheaf of laurel leaves was prominent. Above it was a deep frame enclosing a plaster panel, about four feet high by three feet broad, on which a grandiose Renaissance scene was painted. It was a scene of mellow ruin: through a tangled foreground, where ivy trailed about a great stone urn, one emerged upon a spacious marble pavement with half-ruinous classic buildings of some magnificence grouped round it, and this led to a shore from which boats were putting off to an island with a castle, all in a golden sunset. A galley with sails furled lay at the island. There were several figures in the scene.

In the foreground were two debonair gentlemen with long necks and small heads and graceful legs. Their bright troubadour costumes were faded, but their gallant air remained.

The room itself was the habitation of one family. The head of the house, an elderly brewer's drayman, lay in a bed that occupied a fair part of it. He was suffering from an injury to his leg. The wife, a comfortable, quiet sort of woman, not obsessed by her troubles and work, had kept the home as clean and tidy as practicable, but its aspect was dejected and poor. Two children, one with bare feet, played on the floor. It was growing dark. As I looked at the picture she said, 'Ye should have come earlier if ye wanted to see the picture. Ye're ower late for it now.' 'What is the right time for it?' 'A quarter to three,' she replied at once, 'for it gets the sun just nice by the side o' the building.' I pricked my ears. Could any collector amongst us, I wondered, tell to a quarter of an hour when his favourite picture would be in its best light? She pointed out its beauties. 'Ye can see the ivy hanging ower the vaus just awful bonny-like. Thae stanes lying down there mak' ye think o' auld Edinburie Castle stanes fallen doun.' She said they were 'a' very ta'en up wi' the picture.' He (her husband) liked to look at it, and she had moved his bed that he could see it when he wanted without moving his head. 'I whiles stand an' look at it mysel' when I'm reddin' things up, and I've seen us talkin' aboot thae men and what they're efter.' She pointed to the two debonair gentlemen, with their backs to the dejected room of the poor Scots family, mounting the glimmering marble steps to move through the palace with the broken arch, and out by boat to the golden island with the castle in the bay. 'The bairns are gey ta'en wi'

it, too. I've catched them sitting by the fire at night makin' up stories aboot thae men.' 'What sort of stories?' 'Oh, just a' havers like. I heard the wee yin saying that that yin wi' the lang legs was Wullie Wallace. But they'll no let me hear them, and 'deed I dinna gie much heid to what they say, but whiles they're on talkin' and talkin' aboot them and the rest o't till I send them aff to their bed.'

What did the little Scots bairns, crowded together by the fire in the murky curtainless room in the old grandee's house, tell to one another about the Italian gallants strutting in the ancient panel overhead in the flickering light? Whatever it was it would be true romance. Perhaps Hans Christian Andersen or Robert Louis Stevenson, who were children to the end, could have imagined its colour and simplicity.

Possibly the panel itself was a weak affair by Old Norie, after a forgotten Pannini, or some other artist of the late Roman school, but my impression is that it was better in its way than the Nories in the high-perched City Museum. My visit, of course, was only for a few minutes. One could not trespass further on the kindness of a woman with a sick husband and restless children. Moreover, I was overlooking her whole house – drawing-room, parlour, bedroom, kitchen, storeroom and hall – and what woman of any class would like a stranger to do that on a minute's notice? The extraordinary patience of all the people of the *lands* with a wandering and inquisitive perambulator I can never forget. These people had inhabited that room for twenty years (and in that time one person had come to see the picture), and the woman never wanted to leave it. The picture, which seemed to mean so much to them, had not always

been appreciated by the tenant. It was blemished by a large dirt-mark in the glowing Italian sky over the island. A former tenant had slashed a dirty household brush across it in a tantrum because the factor had turned her into the street. That was for remembrance.

And so some echo of the grace o' life dwelt in the old lord's room with the drayman and his household. I wonder if this golden panel meant more to the founder of the house who gave the builder his plans and watched the cunning artificers at work – the carvers, the plasterers, and perhaps the artist himself, for the painting is on plaster – and when it was all finished, walked through his handsome rooms, and probably gave a house-warming to his friends, who would come in coaches with out-riders and in sedan-chairs. Possibly the men would gather here, for they say it was the library. Their coats of claret silk, or blue English broadcloth, or plum-coloured Genoa velvet, lace ruffles, swords and silver snuff-boxes and their powdered wigs, would have looked appropriate beside the rich and formal carving in the old room. As they passed the new joke from Parliament House and criticized the music at St. Cecilia's Hall, their attention would be directed by the founder to the painting, and they would admire its bright new colours, and recall how Allan Ramsay was now the King's painter, and my Lord Bute was ruling in London, and the health of the new house would be drunk in canary, and perhaps a blessing asked upon it.

And now all the culture and learning and traditions of which the old house was a pleasant flower, have passed away out of the Old Town, and the guardians of its fallen grandeurs are the very poor. The sick drayman on his bed liked the picture to be

there; his busy, courageous wife stopped to look at it sometimes, although she had known it for twenty years; the barefooted children made up stories about it. I think that Old Norie, or whoever painted it, if he ever looked down from the shades, must have felt a proud man, and surely also the astonished old grandee would not feel sorry.

Nor did the pleasure in the golden panel die with these tenants. In my perambulations in 1926 I visited the house again. The old drayman was dead and his wife had gone. The boys who made up stories about the gallants in the picture had grown up to find in France stranger adventures than ever fell to Wallace Wicht. But the new tenant, a kindly woman who has made a brighter place of the old room, was just as ta'en up with the picture and she, too, knew when it lookit its best, and again there were children there who had made their own fancies about it.

CANONGATE CHURCH

CHAPTER V

GHOSTS

EVEN A SLIGHT ACQUAINTANCE WITH EDINBURGH AND HER history will reveal how circumstances without and within have fertilized the mind of Old Town dwellers, so that above all other citizens they have produced and sustained the darkest supernatural imaginings and traditions of the uncanny.

Above all our cities, Edinburgh is famous for her ghost-lore, and the world knows how her two famous sons, Scott and Stevenson, created the best ghost-stories ever written in English. Edinburgh inspired James Hogg with his uncanny masterpiece, and even Dickens did not escape her spell, for has not his richest ghost-invention for its prologue the Bagman's Uncle on the North Bridge musing over the fantastic city? And for more tangible examples of her power to arouse the spirit of dread in the hearts of men, are there not the authenticated stories of haunted houses in desirable parts of the Old Town, which, even until the middle of last century, lay empty and were shunned by the very poorest, although they might live in them rent free? The experience related by that desperate cobbler Patullo, who sought to rescue Major Weir's mansion in the West Bow from the dominion of darkness, seems not so much an account of what actually happened as of what the populace were hoping fearfully would happen – and Patullo was distinctly of the populace.

It is not difficult to see how, down to the beginning of the last century, the mind of the people in the Old Town had a natural bias towards the supernatural, and was, as photographers say, 'sensitized' to its suggestion and well developed, as it were, in this dark room. The darkness in which, as a consequence of the

peculiarities of its architecture, so much of their life was spent; the spectral presence of the *haar*, and the strange sounds of the wind at night in the high, rat-ridden *lands*; the proximity of graveyards and ancient houses everywhere, with their traditions of sudden death and unravelled mysteries; the constant reading and literal belief in the Old Testament, and the genius of the old Calvinist spirit for Satanic visions – these influences combined and reacted on a people who derived something speculative from their Teutonic ancestry and something mystic from the Celts.

There is a peculiar gusto and smack in the intimate details of many of the Edinburgh legends of horror that argue sharp pleasures of the imagination, as though the sensuousness of a people narrowly restrained by a religion that forbade colour and ritual, and a climate grudging of warmth and fruit, had turned inward for dainty feeding.

There is something secret, despite their teeming life, in the physiognomy of the monumental buildings, that seem too securely built to be the lodgings only for the living, especially as they stand at dawn – aged, permanent, enigmatic as Egyptian tombs, fronting an empty, silent world; or, stranger still in the white *haar* that steals up in wispy battalions from the North Sea, lingering about the closes, and dissolving the stories one after another into thin white air, in which even the Castle becomes a phantom. On the minds of the people, especially of children, driven indoors by this delicate assailant, the effect is worth considering. 'It was like a man made o' *haar*,' an old Edinburgh nurse said to an ignorant child when explaining what a ghost was. Now *haar* is the only atmospheric phenomenon that would be helpful here. Snow appears in busy, tangible companies

filling the whole sky, obviously sent from heaven for purposes of its own; rain is drops of water, as every child knows; moonlight has no motion of its own; fog, in the ordinary way, would only raise up a vision of a chimney-sweep. But *haar* – *haar* is white and clammy and never still. It appears in the houses. You can see it coming towards you. It is itself a wraith; so any Edinburgh child can tell a ghost immediately it sees one.

And if the white sights of Edinburgh assist the sentiment for the uncanny, there is also a unique apportionment of darkness to excite the mind to people the unknown with exaggerated fancies. The dark closes and stairs and corridors, the narrow wynds where the grey and ghastly light filters down between the buildings, the darkened rooms with small shot-windows, or windows with small panes in heavy wooden frames, the stone walls, four feet thick, that shut out all sound and give a sense of prison – all combine to cast the mind back on itself and give it a gloomy direction. In a sense unknown to southern cities, the people of Old Edinburgh walk in shadow. There is darkness enough in the long winter, but in many of the turnpike stairs and in the narrow wynds the gloom hangs from January to December. On the sunniest day you have only to turn off the High Street, or the Canongate, or Greenside, and you see people disappearing into entries of impenetrable darkness to hive in rooms where it is always night.

That is in the parts of the Old Town where the poorer classes live, but even the lawyer, going to and from the Law Courts in the High Street, cannot but feel something of the spell. The University brings the students into the Old Town, and now Settlements are keeping many of them there. The manifold

charities of Edinburgh bring women of all classes into its slums. The boy of romantic perceptions at school or college, given the key of the Edinburgh streets, is given the key to much more. How young Scott must have prowled about the closes and wynds on his way home from the High School to George Square, his great head already teeming with visions of the past. It is probably a personal reminiscence when he says, 'Bold indeed was the urchin who approached the gloomy house in West Bow with the risk of seeing Major Weir's enchanted staff parading the desolate apartments, or hearing the hum of the necromantic wheel of his sister Grizel.' And James Hogg, stravaiging round the town, visiting this and that friend high up in the *lands*, soon forgot the brownies of Ettrick for the familiars of the Canongate. He has left the uncanny secret of the Old Town, with all its whispers and shadows, in *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, where Old Edinburgh and the Old Testament make an unholy confluence. And who can doubt that the haunted city bent the mind of young Robert Louis Stevenson with every skirling wind that shook its stony t'gallants and sobbed through the closes, though his thoughts even then were turning to the long vista of little beckoning lamps lit by Leerie in the gloaming to star the steep rainy streets that led him at last down to the sea?

These are some impressions of the Old Town, with its darkness and *haar* and strange habitations and peculiarities, which may be helpful for the better understanding of the powerful effects of Scott, Chambers, Stevenson, and Hogg, in whose works the spiritual essence of Old Edinburgh is preserved in all its potency. Although the Edinburgh of the twentieth century

is ever changing, superstition has not quite fled from it; wisps of it still hang about the old *lands* as the Gothic darkness lingers in their long lobbies and stair-towers. A few stories were told to me of apparitions and inexplicable sounds and lights in shut-up houses, but nowadays townspeople will not talk to strangers about these matters, and the great majority are not interested in them. One old woman, who was said to have had an uncanny experience, would say no more than that 'she had lived in the close for forty years and had never seen anyone worse than hersel'.' This was not an uncommon formula. Another evasive answer was that they were 'a stranger in the close and couldna say.' And even when a ghostly experience was told, a cynical neighbour would seek to destroy its effect, as when a woman had told me how she was sair troubled with the ghost of a woman in white, moaning and groaning, and a neighbour added, 'I ken what she's efter wi' her ghosts: she wants something ta'en off her rent. That's her.' Of course it was only on rare occasions that one could venture to lead the talk towards the supernatural. That a community which for some hundred years should have shown a peculiar genius for perceiving and creating ghosts, should now have altogether lost the faculty, seemed unlikely, and with patience, friends, and luck I gathered a little evidence that in some corners of the ancient town the old element was still working behind the everyday life of the closes. The incidents which I will now relate are offered as a footnote to Edinburgh ghost-lore. They could only have happened where there was a communal belief in the apparitions. The legend which the ghost perpetuated was lost, but the ghost appeared more mysterious than ever in its unattached condition.

The first ghost frequented the appropriate locality of Chessel's Court in the Canongate, that decayed and melancholy *land* that still faces its little fore-court with a certain stateliness. Its dull, darkened rooms bear carved insignia and arms of forgotten families, and in its dim chimney panels faded nymphs in golden brown groves glimmer a little in the firelight, while heavy plaster symbols, that have long lost their meaning, still decorate the mantelpieces and door-heads. In one room in the west wing there is a white plaster festoon in high relief on a panel over the mantel which affected in an eerie way the old doited granny who lived there. She connected it in some way with a child's mort-cloth, and when a stranger came into her room she would take him by the arm and say, 'Look, look at thon cloth. D'ye ken what it's for? There's a dead wean hid ahint it.'

It is certainly an eerie *land*. Its now dingy glories bring the old life near to us, and one's thoughts drift back to the dead and gone gentlefolk who once came and went by these tall doors and looked out of the beaded windows.

The woman who told the story of the Chessel's Court ghost lived in a very ancient house in the Lawnmarket. She was a middle-aged wife of the name of Gordon. Her story came out in answer to a remark by an old woman who sat very stiffly in a corner chair and corroborated each detail. Mrs. Gordon was a pleasant earnest woman, and as she went on with her story she ceased to work about her kitchen. 'I had heard a lot about it, but I never saw it,' she said, 'although I have been near seeing it. We lived on the top flat, and that was where it was said to be. It had been there lang syne. One nicht I was in the room, and I heard somebody breathing hard just outside the door. It was like

some yin stopping after climbing the stairs before going on. I opened the door and looked out with the candle in my hand. It was naebody – it was the ghost. Mony times again I heard it – breathing hard at the top o' the stairs just as I'm telling you. But I never saw it right. My guid-brither did – O, he saw it and near lost his mind.

'He was sleepin' in his bed in the big room. It was an old-fashioned room, as maybe you know, with a recess a' carved-like. It must have been a grand room in the auld days. The recess was too small for him, he being big, so the bed was sort o' half in the recess and half oot. In the middle o' the nicht he woke up sudden. What was it? Oot comes something past him as though it had cam' oot o' the recess. It was like a tall woman in black silk, and the dress stuck oot a' round and near took up the hale room, and he couldna see the face o' it, for it had a long black veil covering the hale heid. It was awfu' tall, just as the folk said. Weel, there he was, a' in a sweat, and the ghost was clean vanished. He up and on wi' his claes and oot o' the house, and that was the last we had o' him, for he wouldna stop, no' if ye had peyed him for it. I had heard say that the woman had to do with the recess. She had hanged hersel' there or something in the auld times. I never saw her mysel', but I have heard her at the top of the stairs in the dark . . . breathing hard . . . just outside the door.'

Another Old Town ghost story that was told to me had a farcical turn that amateurs of the supernatural may not like, but it is, I think, the right sort of farce – the sort of joke, in short, that the other ghosts would tell against the ghost of the story some dawn after cock-crow, when their night's work was over

and they were gossiping together in Limbo. It is the story of the ghost in Bible-land, that tall, rough-hewn old Canongate building with the carved panel over the close that bears an open Bible and a holy inscription. It was told to me by Mrs. Scrougal, whose house is also in the Lawnmarket, and it is mainly about Mr. Scrougal. Mr. Scrougal, before he took up with her, was courting a young woman that stopped in a house on the top flat of Bible-land. One night Mr. Scrougal had taken her home from a party and had seen her up the stair to her door. At the top landing he saw the ghost. He aye described it as like a middle-aged wife in an old-fashioned tartan gown and a white apron, with a white mutch on her head, and it had a terrible effect on Mr. Scrougal, for he ran downstairs and near tumbled. Aye well, he came back two nights later and told the young woman's father what he had seen, but the father just roared and laughed at him taking so much notice of it. They had all seen it often and often, and had stopped paying any heed to it, and they were awful diverted at him making all the hullabaloo just because he saw it. It was always seen at the same place on the landing, and that was the place, they say, where the wife was killed. Anyway, Mr. Scrougal, displeased at the way the lassie's father went on about it, began to stop going there. The end of it was that he cooled off in that courtship and ultimately married the lady who told me the story. Many tales have been told of the intervention of the supernatural in the affairs of everyday life, but seldom has it been so effective and satisfactory as in the case of the ghost in tartan in the Bible-land in the Canongate.

These are present-day ghost stories of the Old Town of Edin-

burgh, and their main interest is that both show a communal telepathic suggestion still at work. Mrs. Gordon would not have heard, and her guid-brither probably would not have seen, the Chessel's Court ghost, if they had not been supported by the public opinion of the district. Mr. Scrougal saw his ghost through the same psychic atmosphere, and his mistake was that he did not fall into line with the others and accept it as part of the fixtures of Bible-land.

Thus it was with the Old Town folk. How far the ghost-spirit of the past works in the minds of the descendants of those who dwelt on the haunted ridge, is a much more difficult thing to learn. One can say at least that a knowledge of ghost-lore and eerie legend is more widely spread here than in other towns. The fashionable forms of psychic experiment, with which I am not here concerned, are said to have a considerable following on the Drumsheugh headlands.

One of the most charming of my recollections is of a little luncheon party in a delectable square, where the stones of the houses are purple and ochre and grey, and the rough setts in its little-used streets are tinged with delicate moss and hair-like grass – the final touch of beauty. The centre is a wide misty green garden, and the whole place is like an elegant old sedan-chair, gently decaying, with bright glass still in the lozenge panels.

In a house in this square where, if anywhere, people had the right to talk of such things – for at No. 28 dwelt the most notorious hanging judge of a hanging time, whose memory is kept green in the tall hemlocks in the little back-garden – every one happened to talk of ghosts. It may only, of course, have

been a coincidence, but there it was; they *were* talking about ghosts, although ghosts at luncheon are rather like liqueurs at breakfast, and such is the interest in affairs of the mind in this delightful city that no one seemed unfriendly to the turn of the talk, and every one was willing to give of their best and to tell it with an art which, alas, I cannot imitate. One lady had visited the island of Inchcolm in a small boat. They had spent some time on the island, and were rowing away when some one in the boat cried, 'Look! look!' Then they all saw quite clearly the head and shoulders of a monk leaning over one of the windows of the ruin there and looking at them. It was a bright evening before sunset. Afterwards they all compared their recollections of the apparition, and it was the same to each person.

The other story was more extraordinary and differs in kind from any I have read. It had happened some years ago, when the lady who told it was a girl at school. The family had gone into the country for the summer, and were living in an old-fashioned house whose history the lady did not know. One morning when she was lying in bed watching the sunshine in the big bedroom, she saw a very wild thing – a figure of a strangely distorted and deformed kind, very awful to behold, and it was dancing in the sunlight. She saw it quite distinctly, and, unable to cry out, fainted away. She never said a word to anyone about the apparition. One morning, about a year afterwards, in their Edinburgh house, she was at her school-work, and her younger sister was practising at the piano. This was very annoying, and she asked her sister to stop, but she still went on strumming. At last she cried, 'If you don't stop playing, I'll show you something very horrible – something more horrible than anything

you've ever seen in all your life.' The sister, however, said she didn't care, and went on playing. The other girl then drew as carefully as she could the horrible thing she had seen dancing in the bedroom of the old house in the country, and when she was done she put the drawing on the piano and said, 'There!' Her sister looked at it, instantly stopped playing, and became terribly agitated, crying out, 'Oh, did you see it too? Did you see it in the bedroom of the old house at –?' She had seen the thing herself, and had determined never to tell anyone, because it was too horrible.

There was a silence after this. The lady was agitated by the memory of the affair, and the others were turning it over in their minds and wondering whether they might ask questions, whether she would draw the horror again for us. Then some one relieved the tension by talking of the other side of ghost affairs. Ghosts were terrible to man, not because he believed in them, but because he didn't believe in them. To a person who did not believe in ghosts, nothing could be so shattering as the sudden appearance of a ghost. A person who did believe in ghosts, on the other hand, would be supported at the moment of the apparition by the knowledge that his or her theory had been the right one. The thing was to domesticate your ghost as in the story of Mr. Scrougal. Yes, that was the sound view – to domesticate one's ghost. . . . And where could one domesticate a ghost so well as in Edinburgh?

The lamps were being lit and the misty winter evening was creeping over the square as I left the house. A company of young men and women came out of the gardens talking briskly together as they walked towards the student Settlements in the

houses at the north end. Doors were shut on their laughter and talk, and the old square lay quite silent in the mists; its sober, seemly little houses, each so like its neighbours, yet each with its own physiognomy and its individual load of experience, seemed to assume an air of watchfulness and expectancy. My eye was drawn by the little doors with their Doric portals and clean doorsteps (some with small flights of steps) all round the square. The aspect of the place at this hour, its sober key pitched low enough to be as friendly to phantoms as to ourselves, made it that moment to conjure up (if much wistfulness make good enchantment) my square's old tenants. How if each and all of them, one after another through the generations, were to cross this quiet spot and turn each to his own old grey-brown house, go up the steps and open his door! What a company they would be! how much of the wit, learning and bravery of that old Edinburgh which was an intellectual centre of Europe, would pass through that little square. There would be the tall, blue-coated figure of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, who went about the square with a pet ape which wore a cocked hat and was once identified by an old lady as one of 'thae awfu' French prisoners.' The stout old Admiral Duncan who kept in No. 5 the great ensign and sword of the Dutch admiral he took at Camperdown; Harry Erskine, with his flashing eye and wide, sensitive mouth, the fearless advocate and friend of every poor man in Scotland; Lord President Blair, the greatest lawyer the country ever had ('Ma man, God Almighty spared nae pains when He made your brains'); Jamieson the Scots lexicographer, the Duchess of Gordon, and many another notable figure and many a lord and lady with an historic name. Lady Don, the last person in Edin-

burgh to keep a sedan-chair, would be borne in it up her steps by her uniformed bearers.

And then there are the figures who go down the steps. At No. 25 a man, booted, cloaked, and muffled to the eyes, comes out quickly by himself, looks right and left and walks away with his head bent. A moment afterwards a window lifts and a tea-cup is thrown out, falling shattered on the stones, and a voice cries, 'Neither lips of me nor mine come after Murray of Broughton's.' A boy opens the door and peeps out at the broken cup with a strange excited look on his young face. He is lame, and his head has almost a misshapen look in its height and weight. He wears a large green waistcoat with two rows of buttons, corduroy breeks tied at the knee by a knot of brown cotton tape, and white stockings. He goes back to the house slowly. Old Scott threw the cup out of his window, for Murray of Broughton was a traitor; young Walter kept the saucer, for Murray of Broughton was history and romance.

But as I dream in the misty old square and summon up these figures of the past, a dark, rough-looking old ghost with stick and lanthorn comes stumping along, and as he passes, a ferocious eye under humorously twitching eyebrows and a sneering cudgel nose appear. Then, from the taut bibulous mouth the lower lip juts out, and the shrewd eye of old Braxfield winks at the dreamer nursing his little fancies, and the voice that shook the Courts a hundred years ago, cries in its rough, old-fashioned tones, 'Signor Fiddle-eerie, Signor Fiddle-eerie,' and then over his shoulder, 'O, for Goad's sake, no more of the SIGNOR.'

THE BACKS OF LEITH STREET

CHAPTER VI

THE PENNY PLAIN WITH A TINT

I WOULD LEAVE MANY A FAMOUS THING IN EDINBURGH unvisited for the sake of Leith Walk. Its attraction is always active, but how is one exactly to put one's finger on the cause so that the eyes of the unsympathetic may be opened! It represents a half-shabby side of Edinburgh that is always overlooked, although the part it plays in the drama of the city will be found on consideration to have contributed much to your enjoyment of the piece. Nicolson Street, Fountainbridge, Bristo Street, and many other elderly parts of the city have much the same air, but Leith Walk must be taken as the best statement of their case.

It is old-fashioned rather than old, weighty and singular in its architecture, but not stately or grim. Queens have ridden up its brae to a life of strange and terrible happenings, English armies have tramped along it to set Edinburgh in a lowe, but somehow Leith Walk does not associate itself with history, nor is there an ancient building (hardly even a new one) throughout its length. It stands dourly apart and must be liked for itself. The only associations that help one to its spirit are Carlyle's story of the Russian sailors climbing its lamp-posts to drink the oil, and leaving Leith Walk in eclipse so long as the Russian fleet was in the Firth in 1799, and the note to one of old Geikie's etchings that tells how, after their fish and oysters were sold, the Newhaven fishwives would meet at a rendezvous for a single dram, sally forth with empty creels, and march down Leith Walk in a breast, singing in full chorus 'The Boatie Row.'

What, then, is its attraction? I think the answer is that it presents to us the everyday world of yesterday in so striking and

complete a form that it wears some of the graces of antiquity. We know buildings that have the interest of a bygone age that now seems a period of romance, and we identify what is elderly enough to be old-fashioned and dowdy; but we rarely recognize any stage between the two. It is a mark of an age over-conscious of its pace that in certain things we should be able to see the picturesque in the recent. Our fathers collected samplers and Paisley shawls, and our *elegants* are collecting coloured prints of the Crystal Palace, and Berlin wool-work, and horsehair furniture. But although people are conscious of a charm in the characteristic knick-knacks of yesterday, they have not yet made a cult of it in street architecture. In Leith Walk you feel dimly the romantic satisfactions of posterity; you may pluck, as it were, the first shy buds of antiquity. It is, indeed, the street for the epicure of topography.

I like its narrow neck between the tall grey *lands*, especially those on the west side with the semi-octagonal towers and the broad, shabby terrace gallery with shops on it where no one seems to go. The shops beneath the gallery are of the busy, popular, amusing sort that sell Edinburgh Rock, and three cigars for a shilling, and little canes with coloured tops which wise fathers give to clever sons who count correctly the number of stories in the tallest *land* in the Old Town, and photographs of Edinburgh Castle in a border of tiny shells for bluejackets to take back to Portsmouth. Then, as survivals from a superior past, there is the aromatic old shortbread shop that sweetens its whole neighbourhood, and a gargantuan tobacco shop with mounds and plateaux of tobacco in the windows, before which you often see countrymen pause and remark to one another that

there is corn in Egypt yet. Often I have looked for the stationer's shop of Stevenson's boyhood. You remember it? The shop 'in whose window all the year round there stood displayed a theatre in working order with a "forest set," a "combat" and a few "robbers carousing" in the slides; and below and about – dearer tenfold to me! – the plays themselves, those budgets of romance, lay tumbled one upon another – a penny plain, two pence coloured.' I have often thought that Leith Walk, in its relation to the High Street, was the Penny Plain of Edinburgh on which the brush of Time is beginning half-sportively to lay a faint tint or two of his Twopenny Colour.

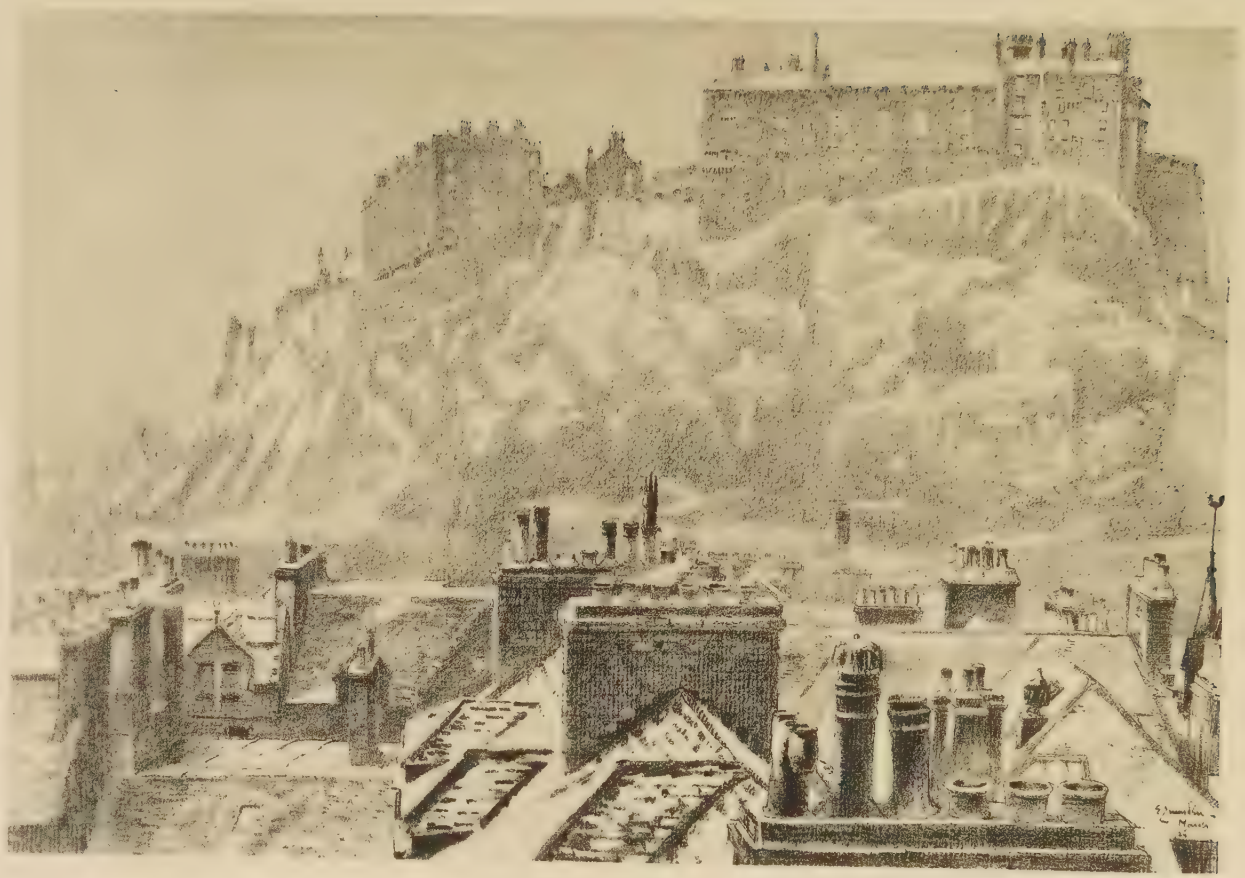
One or two of those queer underground shops and taverns that used to startle strangers so much can still be found there. These cellar shops seem the very doors to the Auld Reekie of the poet Fergusson; they suggest a thickly-fumed under-world of cosiness and tightness and dimness 'where couthy chiels at e'ening meet.' They seem to be cowering down from the wind and rain that vex the upper street:

'Not Boreas that sae snelly blows
Dare here pap in his angry nose.'

There are still several of them in the Old Town and in the old part of the New Town to give the lie to the story that Edinburgh loves the bottle overmuch – only a sober people could have preserved its neck for a week among these man-traps. In the past decade many have gone, but that very wide shop, baited with a fragrance of hot mutton-pies, that opens so suddenly in the half-octagon here, is still in its place, and so too is the old wooden Highlandman outside the tobacco shop near by. The

bad boys – Borrow will tell you about them – used to send him whirling down the steep street ('Aw, yer kiltie's awa'! Ye've lost yer kiltie!'), to be recovered near Leith. But now his little trolly on wheels has been taken from him and his travels are over. For some years he stood high in a small barbed niche beside the door and offered a pinch of snuff to the birds. Now he stands in the shop like a customer.

But beyond its attraction as the choicest expression of the Penny Plain in transition to the Twopenny Coloured, Leith Walk has an interest that is much more apparent. Few things in Edinburgh are really more astonishing than the way this great thoroughfare spurts down its steep gorge from Princes Street and gradually widens until, dammed by the little fully-licensed island of buildings opposite the theatre, it seems to burst its banks and, attaining Amazonian width, rolls down the hill with terrific force, bearing tram-cars like cockle-shells on its bosom. It must be a sundering flood to timid friends who live on different sides. I could stand for hours and watch it from the bottom of Picardy Place. Its enormous scale is increased by the meagre traffic, and its downward rush by the sharply diminishing perspective of the iron lamp-standards in the middle of the road. If you look long enough, it has the active fascination of a view from a precipice; your legs begin involuntarily to move, and unless you look out you will find yourself trotting. It summons up a vision of all Edinburgh some day following an irresistible impulse and pouring in a multitude down the steep faster and faster and souse into the sea!



THE CASTLE IN SNOW

CHAPTER VII

AN HISTORICAL CHARACTER

OF THE DISTINCTIVE PICTURESQUE FIGURES IN THE COUTHY, clarty old Edinburgh of Robert Fergusson's poems only one survives to walk the Edinburgh streets to-day. The City Guard ('yon black banditti') laid down their Lochaber axes about the time of Waterloo. Scott tells of one or two grey-headed, grey-bearded Highlandmen with war-worn features, bent double by age, and dressed in old-fashioned cocked-hats, bound with white tape instead of silver lace, and in coat, waistcoat, and breeches of muddy-coloured red, still bearing in their withered hands this ancient weapon as late as 1817. These phantoms of former days, he said, 'crept around the statue of Charles II in Parliament Square as if the image of a Stuart were the last refuge for any memorial of our ancient manners.' The Highland chair-man who 'gied his light to deeds o' darkness and o' night,' and to more reputable business with which Fergusson was perhaps less familiar, has vanished with his chair, and only a few metal badges remain in the City Museum to show us how he appeared in his long square-tailed coat, and how honesty was impressed upon him as a policy.

The 'cawdie' or caddie, although it was not found necessary to engrave the axiom on his badge, had a great name for honesty. Captain Topham wrote that you could trust the caddie with any sum of money you pleased, and, if he lost it, his Society would make it good, and that it did so on an occasion when the loss was £300! The caddie has not departed, though his paper-lantern has, but he has suffered a tee-change into an autocrat of the golf

links whom you cannot so completely trust with lost balls. The Blue-gownsmen, the peep-show Jamies, and the ballad-singers have all gone.

Only one old-world figure remains, but she is the most picturesque in costume and the most interesting personality of them all. I mean, of course, the Newhaven or Musselburgh fishwife. With a few slight changes the costume she wears to-day can be traced back through pictures and descriptions for at least two hundred years. For at least five centuries she has served Edinburgh much as she does in shrunken numbers to-day. Newhaven has been the nearest fishing village to Edinburgh for much longer than that, and until the middle of the eighteenth century fish was almost the only meat the poorer citizens knew.

Every visitor to Edinburgh knows and likes the Newhaven fishwife. One of the most intimate satisfactions Edinburgh affords on return after a long absence, is to see her again going about the streets with her quaint dress and creel. She would be more missed than the Scott monument. She carries history in her creel. When Edinburgh men wore buff jerkins and steel caps, she was climbing up from her red-tiled village to feed them with her fish. Probably she went to John Knox's back-door behind the Canongate, although the scared monks in the Abbey must have been better customers, particularly on a Friday. All through the killing times she would be there selling her fish to persecutor and martyr, and when Prince Charlie came to Holyrood she would be at the doors with rumours of Hanoverian fleets in the Firth; and so down the ages. She has had a word from nearly all the writers on Edinburgh. Charles Reade

in his *Christie Johnstone* made her an ideal. Lady Nairne's great song, 'Caller Herrin',' has touched our ideas of her with tragedy and tenderness. The air of the song was suggested to Nathaniel Gow by the cries of the Newhaven fishwives in George Street blending with the chimes of St. Andrew's Church bells. Henley has described her costume:

> 'A wide blue coat, a squat and sturdy throng
> Of curt blue coats, a mutch without a speck,
> A white vest broidered black, her person deck,
> Nor seemed their old-world quaintness wrong.
> Her great creel forehead slung, she wanders nigh,
> Easing the great strap with her gnarled brown fingers,
> The spirit of traffic watchful in her eye
> Ever and anon imploring you to buy.'

Henley did not mention her striped, coloured petticoats, which show below the upper blue skirt, her black stockings and neat shoes. Some of the women wear no other head-dress than their own abundant hair combed close and smooth. The creel rests on the back below the waist, and is steadied on the top by a broad band which goes round the forehead. The cleanness, neatness, suitability and picturesqueness of the dress enhances their appearance whether they be young or old. I have seen one young maid in Princes Street, her reddish yellow hair glistening in the sun, her colour clear and high, her eye very bright, sea-blue and steadfast, and her firm blond arms bare to the elbow. Her strong young figure would once have been thought a trifle too broad, but to-day no one would deny its beauty. Yet somehow, although Edinburgh is a house of call to rich men of all

countries, no one seems yet to have had the sense and spirit to make a match of it with a Newhaven lassie. When Charles Reade makes it clear that Lord Ipsden is not going to marry Christie Johnstone, I confess that I lost all patience with the book.

With the old women the dress is yet more suitable, a soberer colouring of shawl and petticoat being the chief difference, but it can be worn only by those whom Nature has honoured with a noble physique. I had the good fortune once to be entertained by one old lady who had the fineness of age and the white spotless *mutch* of the best of Hals' old Regentessen. She was nearing eighty, yet her ankle was shapely, and her arms and hands had not lost their firm strength. Her wrinkled face was bleached to an extreme clean whiteness, which was not the pallor of age. It was firm and dimpled when she smiled. She said that she did not go out with the creel in thae days. Something went wrang with her; she couldna right say what it was – a sort o' closeness in the chest, she thought. So she had stopped going out with the creel. When was that? Oh, she would hae been about sixty-five when that happened till her. It was very hard work in her young days, before the cars came, carrying the creel up the hill to Edinburgh and whiles up the high scale-stairs on the top of it. In her mother's time it must have been worse when their chief customers lived on the seventh and eighth floor in the Lawnmarket and High Street.

She said it was an ordinary thing for a fishwife to carry two hundredweight on her back. This seemed to me at first only the over-statement of old age, but subsequent inquiry among fish-salesmen and fishermen confirmed her story. The creel proper

holds about a hundredweight and a half, and the shallow basket or *skull* that fits on the top often contains half a hundredweight of big cod. My old woman had gone day after day up the long Leith Walk in rain and wind and snow and sun, up into Edinburgh with the herring and fish (the fisher-folk make this distinction) fresh from the sea. Now she sat in peace in a bower of bright tinkling china and pictures of old ships and curiosities from fishers dead and gone, and her grandsons told her their latest ongauns as Boy Scouts.

Like most old people, she had her doubts about the new generation. Hardly one of the Newhaven lassies nowadays would carry the creel like their mothers, and they were lengthening their dress down to their shoes. They might be onything. Naebody would tak' them for decent Newhaven lassies. And so to old Newhaven it was an indelicacy to cover the stocking just as it was then to reveal it. It seems a long time ago.

The old lady I have mentioned was sometimes called the Queen of Newhaven, in token whereof she was said to wear twelve petticoats. The number worn by the Newhaven wives in general has long been a matter of much curiosity to their neighbours 'up the hill,' but naturally enough it is a subject on which very little information is available. Although their reputation is very different indeed from the women of Billingsgate, they can speak directly to the point, especially when any attempt is made to make free with their peculiarities. A rejoinder that is remembered with pride in the village was made by a fishwife to a lady in a tram-car who put to her the inopportune question how many petticoats did she, as a Newhaven fishwife, really wear? 'Eh well, mem,' she replied, 'if you'll let me coont yours I'll let

you coont mine.' This was considered very effective, especially as it was made in the hobble year 1910. The usual number, however, is said to be eight or nine. The reason for this multiplicity of petticoats is that the creel drips continually and a stout protection is necessary, although rheumatism always finds its way in. Moreover, they are useful as forming a saddle for the creel.

The old communal life of their village is ebbing away and the young people are free to follow easier trades. Intermarriage within the community, which, as it produced women who could carry a two-hundredweight load into Edinburgh, seems certainly to have brought no decadence, is now less common. It flourished not so much through the exclusiveness of an ancient community as from common sense: a Newhaven man who married a stranger had no one trained to prepare his nets and bait and to carry and sell his fish, and so his lot, hard in any case, became yet harder.

A Newhaven marriage, being a union of gifts as well as of hearts, was worthy of much celebration. The whole community prepared for it, and went through the solemnity of 'the walk' after the wedding. The bride and bridegroom headed the parade, followed by all the younger people of the village; the men wearing white jean trousers and blue pilot-jackets with velvet collars and Balmoral bonnets with strings, the girls all in white. A man just past middle-age told me that a hundred couples had walked at his wedding. It was the tramway cars that put an end to this pleasing pageant. Their success in bringing people down from Edinburgh to see 'the walk' decided the Newhaven folk not to walk again.

After 'the walk' the company went to one of the three hotels, where dancing was carried on till morning. At my friend's wedding there was only space in the room for three couples and the fiddler. They danced a sort of jig, very fierce and continuous, and when they slacked, eager voices at the door shouted to them to come ashore and let fresh couples take their place. Next morning a curious custom was observed by the friends of the bridegroom taking him down to the beach with his wife's creel on his back and filling it with stones. He had then to stagger back to his home with it, and so prove that he could support a wife.

There must be a good deal in the old Newhaven superstition that when fishermen die they are changed into sea-gulls. After sailing the contrary waters for many years, what a liberation to sail the air freely, without a care for time or tide, wind or calm; to see your fishy quarry from a height, to take no more of them than you fancy, to have done with counting and bargaining and worry about sending your catch into the city, or by early trains to the great towns. You eat your own fish and your work is done. Then you rest on the water and perhaps sleep. You are your own boat as you are your own net and market and customers. What a change it must be after the unceasing preparation, toil and anxiety of a fisherman's life!

This belief – superstition, if you will – must represent the dream of the old fisherman who only hopes that things will really work out in this sensible way. It would not then be necessary to re-arrange many of his thoughts and habits. He and the sea-gull have so much in common: the preoccupation with fish, the keen eye, the strong sense of smell without finicky

dislikes; the same robust ideas about weather and wetness. Practice in a flapping oilskin coat would make wings fairly easy to manage. The Newhaven gulls, I noticed, came ashore a good deal, not in little screaming packs, like the silly Thames gulls, but singly and with much gravity. In the morning you will see them at intervals perched on the shore-wall from Newhaven to the Wardie Hotel – huge grey fowls big as ducks, solemn and silent, but for a firm insistent squawk now and then to remind their allies in the houses that breakfast is late. I have never seen such large and decorous sea-gulls. They sail over the low old fishing village, and sometimes land on those broad crooked fore-stairs with the strong wooden railings, that lead to the upper floors of the cottages, or walk a few steps on the gravestones (possibly their own) of old fishermen in the little churchyard. When the fishing-boats are in harbour, they like to rest on the tops of the masts, especially if there is a gentle movement on the water to make them sway.

One morning I saw five great sea-gulls on the mast-tops in the harbour. An elderly man, wearing a doggy old fur sea-cap of a type you rarely see nowadays except on whalers, was leaning over the wall and looking at them in a friendly way. Some one asked him if he knew any of these sea-gulls when they were fishermen. The old man made a sharp reply. He had not liked either the question or its levity. 'The gulls are the fisherman's friend,' he added. 'Ye wad go away on and on and not see any fish, and then ye wad come on them on the water setting, and there would be fish in plenty after that. No fisherman would say a bad word about sea-gulls. They are the kindly yins – kindly birds.' It was no use pressing him about the sea-gulls, nor

on the other old superstitions about the boats putting back if anyone on board mentioned the word 'minister,' or (for some reason) 'Brounger,' or 'salmon' (although salmon may be spoken of as 'red fish'), but I noticed that neither he nor any of the other old men had left these beliefs so far behind as to make a joke of them.

He was one of the last of the old Newhaven seamen. The sailing fleet itself is almost a thing of the past, and most of them have a flag painted on the bow to show that they are pilot-boats. The pilots are men of the world, as a shark's tooth on their watch-chain, or some such foreign ornament will tell you, for the old regulation still holds good that they have to serve so many years in square rig before they are qualified to apply for a pilot's certificate. The great majority of the Newhaven men are now on trawlers, but many have left the sea, and the electric cars that run along the main street snatch up the smartest of the younger generation and bear them off to the city to become good tradesmen and men of business. Once I was told by a Newhaven man, whose blood mounted to his face in the telling, that the Boxmaster of the Ancient Society of Free Fishermen of Newhaven was a tailor. Every seaman of the old school is a bit of a tailor – probably a ninth part – and has none of the contempt that your literary landsmen, who have no knowledge of its art, profess for that trade; but still, there you had it: the Boxmaster of the Ancient Society of Free Fishermen of Newhaven was a tailor!

Of the Society itself a good deal might be written, for the history and exclusiveness of this singular little community is bound up in it. Only sons of Free Fishermen can be admitted,

and the entry money is still four pounds Scots (or six shillings and eightpence English). The Free Fishermen possess a silver cup with a ship engraved upon it, which was presented to them for acting as sea fencibles during the Napoleonic wars, and capturing the French frigate *Theyden* and taking her as a prize to Yarmouth roads. In 1796 the county of Midlothian presented them with a silver medal to commemorate their patriotic offer to fight the enemy in any vessel of war the Government might appoint. These and other relics are treasured at Newhaven. The Great War brought them new and strange achievements. The Society's records go back to 1572, and some say that its history is very much older, but that is doubtful. James IV founded Newhaven when he built a shipyard, harbour and ropery there in 1506.

The new village must have been a centre of Scotland's interest then, for the *Great Michael* (the *Great Eastern* or the first *Dreadnought* of its day) was being built on the shore. Pitscottie says that all the oak in the county of Fife, save only Falkland's, was required for the work. There must have been great scenes here on placid days when the galleys came over the water from Fife towing the great logs. The King and his captains courageous – even Sir Andrew Wood and the Bartons – and his nobles, visited the work where the wrights and labourers were busy, while the country folk and Edinburgh citizens were perpetually coming and going, and perhaps the English ambassador may have been standing by with watchful curiosity. Pitscottie knew the dimensions of the *Great Michael*, for the chief wright had planted them out in hawthorn in Tullibardine, as the Great Duke of Marlborough had the position of the Battle of Blen-

heim marked out with trees in the grounds of his Palace. Her length was 340 feet, her breadth amidships 56 feet to the water but only 36 feet within, as she was 'armour-clad' in solid oak 10 feet thick. She was armed with many heavy guns and 300 shot of small artillery – a terrible ship, the wonder of her age! She had 'falcons, moyennes, quarter-falcons, slings, pestilent serpents and double-dags.' We have many a big gun nowadays, but none so formidable in name as these. And, after all (to keep to the main business), if it comes to a matter of death, who would not rather be killed by a pestilent serpent or a double-dag than by a simple 12-inch gun?

They were worthy of the great romantic king who built this ship, possibly as part of his scheme to take a Scottish fleet to the Mediterranean for his visit to Jerusalem. The *Great Michael* was built, equipped and sailed away, the king leaving her at the May, and that is almost all her history worth telling. (She took part in the discreditable Carrickfergus expedition, then sailed to France, and after Flodden was sold to the French Government and allowed to rot in the harbour of Brest.

It would be interesting to trace a connection between the *Great Michael* of King James IV and the Free Fishermen of Newhaven. King James brought shipwrights and artificers to Newhaven from many countries; and if, as some authorities say, the costume of the women and some of their patronymics indicate a Dutch ancestry, it is one of the possibilities that the community may be descended from a band of shipwrights from Holland (then one of the great shipbuilding countries of the world) who settled with their wives at Newhaven to work in the

royal dockyard. The Society of Free Fishermen was founded at the end of the century in which the *Great Michael* was built. Be that as it may, it is at any rate sure that there are few places in Scotland to-day where the national traits are preserved with so racy and brave a flavour as in the village of Newhaven.

A BONFIRE IN CRAIG'S CLOSE

CHAPTER VIII

SATURDAY AFTERNOONS

MODERN EDINBURGH'S RECREATION TAKES THE FORMS THAT are common to all great centres, and it is difficult for the visitor to put his pen on any game peculiar to the city. That fine old characteristic sport, the *bicker*, which once engaged the enthusiasm of all Edinburgh boys under eighteen years, perished with the coming of the policeman. For centuries it had been their popular idea of a pleasant Saturday afternoon. Heriot's boys would fight Watson's boys; aristocratic George Square boys would fight the plebeian fry of the Potterrow; sometimes the entire youth of the New Town would make a combined assault on the Old Town, and Borrow has told how the filthy alleys and closes of the High Street would disgorge swarms of bareheaded and barefooted callants, who, with gestures wild and 'eldrich screech and hollo,' would pour down the sides of the hill with stones and slings and staves. Sometimes thousands took part in these engagements, limbs were broken, eyes were knocked out, and even death occurred. Yet the game was carried on without particular bitterness, and in the famous case, told by Scott, of the *bicker* in his youth, when one of the George Square boys cut down with his hanger the plebeian leader Green-Breeks, the latter declined either to give to the authorities the name of the lad who had wounded him, or to accept a fund which the aristocrats offered as 'smart-money.' 'We did not become friends,' said Scott, 'for the *bickers* were more agreeable to both parties than any more pacific amusement; but we conducted them ever after under mutual assurances of the greatest consideration for each other.'

So much for the *bicker*. Something of its fierceness, perhaps, lingers in the Rugby football matches by which the Edinburgh schools now settle their rivalries. Although the present form of the game is, of course, English, football is an ancient form of exercise with the Scots – and an ancient traditional form of the game in which hands, feet and head are used, and parish forms 'scrums' against parish, is still played once a year in some Border towns. But Edinburgh football, Rugby and Association, is regulated by the usual modern codes.

Golf has an ancient history in Edinburgh, as you are reminded by a seventeenth-century *land* in the Canongate called 'Golfers' Land,' which bears a crest of a dexter hand grasping a golf-club, with the motto 'Far and Sure.' The tradition – which is now, so to speak, stymied by later evidence – is that one Paterson built the house with money won in a foursome match with the Duke of York (afterwards James VII) as partner, against two Englishmen. There is no doubt, however, of Edinburgh's long devotion to golf, and of the grip which that game (or occupation) has acquired over the lives of the citizens. Only in Edinburgh (and perhaps in St. Andrews) could you find a tombstone with the dead man's virtues summed up in the inscription:

'HE DROVE A LONG BALL.'

There is a story, that ought to be true, of such an inscription in an Edinburgh graveyard. One must needs drive a long ball nowadays to reach a place where there is no golf, and the visitor will see nothing typical of Edinburgh in the game except, perhaps, on the 'Lamiters' Course' on Bruntsfield Links,

where you may see elderly men with one arm or a lame leg playing away gravely their round of thirty or forty holes – of course, very short holes. The motor-car stimulus has now ringed Edinburgh with golf courses and Sabbath golf is now piously played on many courses.

Cricket, shinty, hockey and lawn-tennis are played here as elsewhere, and Powderhall is the centre of foot-racing in Scotland; but more particular mention is required for a sport of which the ordinary citizen never hears, though its success there is one of the minor forms of fame that Edinburgh enjoys, and indeed many honest Yorkshire miners have never heard of this conspicuous city save in its relation to this sport. The sport is, of course, whippet-racing, which gains year by year in importance as the mining districts increase round the capital. To those who believe that Edinburgh's great development will come through the opening of mines and the production of cheap coal, causing the industries to come to the coal instead of the coal to the industries, the miners' sport of whippet-racing must seem in a sense Edinburgh's sport of the future.

The big meets are at Powderhall, but those at Northfield – an enclosure somewhat shy of access near the Portobello Road – seemed to me more racy and characteristic of the ruder side of Edinburgh life. The spectacle I enjoyed one fine autumn day under a breezy sky might indeed have been a page from the notebook of old Walter Geikie, whose drawings (possibly to some degree because of his infirmities – he was deaf and dumb) have a single-minded expressiveness and inner richness of characterization that excels almost anything of the kind done since Hogarth's day. The five starters stand ready to slip the

dogs. Each holds his dog with the left hand under the chest and the right firmly grasping the tail, by that means raising its hind-legs off the ground. The competing dogs yelp; the other dogs, horribly excited, yelp in sympathy. Meantime the owner of each competing dog dances grotesquely in front of it whistling and crying, and swinging furiously a white rabbit skin, coloured cloth, or rubber ball, to which he thus directs the dog's attention. This attained, the animated five retreat backwards, continuing their antics, and so till they reach the tape at the end of the 190 yards course. Behind the dogs stands an important man with a big pistol. The competitors yow-yow, the other dogs yelp loudly, the owners in the distance dance and yell and whistle; the crowd roars, the bookmakers howl. Clearly, the time has come for the race to begin. The starters have the straining dogs pulled back, hind-legs high in the air. Bang!

Each launches his dog with a sort of throw, and without a protest off it flashes. Perhaps one of the dogs has no tail to speak of – probably a limitation imposed on it by a terrier sire. Off he goes with a quick shove like a dinghy off from a pier. Each dog is running for the rabbit skin, cloth or ball (technically 'the rag') by which he was trained. His instinct tells him he has to capture his own object, and he knows that none of the other dogs desire it, so it doesn't really matter how slowly he reaches it; but he also knows – heaven knows how ! – that he is there to run faster than the other dogs, and if he can't succeed he may be lucky enough to get a bite at the fastest. If he wins and gets his teeth in the rag, he holds on, and his master swings him round and round exultantly. If he covers the

190 yards within the twelve seconds, he is not disgraced. Twenty such heats will be lost and won in an afternoon without dogs or men failing in heartiness and noise. It is an extraordinary and entertaining scene, in which a great deal of the rough native humour and peculiarities of Robert Fergusson's 'Auld Reekie' still persists.

The peculiarities of Auld Reekie persist also in a more contemplative way of spending a Saturday afternoon. This is the daunder. The foot pace everywhere in Edinburgh is slower than in other cities in these islands, as is only natural where there is so much worth seeing, but one soon becomes aware, particularly in these quiet grey afternoons which unfold here so often in the year, that a decent serious part of the population is engaged in a quiet relishsome peregrination that has nowhere for an object and is in general taken solitarily. The daunder is common, of course, to all Scots towns, but Edinburgh is the rallying-ground of pensioners, annuitants, retired tradesmen and mechanics, as well as of a particularly contemplative type of elderly worker that the printing trade brings to perfection, and it is of such that your ideal daunderer is made. Sometimes a new clay pipe or even a cheroot, sometimes a circumspect dog, or on occasion a relative or acquaintance with whom have been exchanged long ago all the remarks that could be called for by the sights or happenings,[1] on the road to Corstorphine or Duddingston or Cramond, augment the holiday look of the daunder. A book or a religious journal, too, has been seen borne as part of the ritual. Maybe a visit to a tavern and a glass of Edinburgh yill

[1] I heard one say to his companion as they passed an empty shop, once a grocer's, 'Aye, the glory of that shope has departit.'

is also an incident in the affair, but more often it is a cup of tea in a shop. The daunderer did not gain his position in his craft, or his pension or his annuity without having set a careful course and carried sheet-anchors bow and stern.

As he grows greyer the daunder is taken in home waters. He moves in slow tacks between shops and graveyards, of which Edinburgh offers so unequalled and queer a variety. Bookshops hold him. He picks up a book out of the Tupenny Box, and holding it to his nose he dips into it like a grey old bird – often I have seen a row of him, like a row of herons on the foreshore, pecking very deliberately at the overflow of books that bursts from the windows of the long bookshop near Greyfriars Church and falls in little dingy cascades to near the pavement. But he does not really read more than a line or two, for he would be sweir to raise false hopes in the heart of the bookseller; so down the book goes again into the box. He wipes his spectacles, moons solemnly around and tries another. Then there are for him the graveyards, dank and sparsely grassed, heavy with whitened old tombstones, most of them on a slope over a ravine as though even the dead in Edinburgh were not to be shut out from her great views. Here there are seats and tombstones to spare for the daunderer, who sits with both hands on the horn head of his stick and beholds the world as it sinks away from him and rises again in the grey skies.

Perhaps he has a particular place in the graveyard reserved for himself when his daunders are over, as soon they must be, and his name is already carved thereon like that of Stevenson's old stonemason: '*Alexander Loudon, born seventeen ninety-twa. Died* – and then a hole in the ballant: that's me. Alexander's

my name. They ca'd me Ecky when I was a boy. Eh, Ecky! Ye're a awfu' auld man?'

The long grey afternoon creeps on till the old grey men, ganting and relaxed, perceive the lights peeping out all over the town and the grey streets filling with dark figures, and the night life of Edinburgh setting in. The East Coast chill touches their old bones; they rise stiffly and, tapping their sticks on the stones, they daunder home to take their teas.

HOLYROOD HOUSE

CHAPTER IX

A GLIMPSE

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO WALK ABOUT EDINBURGH WITHOUT thinking of kings and queens and a royal Court. Of all our great cities she alone bears a king's name, and while in so many ancient capitals the buildings where kings ruled have passed away, the Castle and Holyrood, although so little else is left, remain the conspicuous buildings of Edinburgh. Edwin of Deira, although he made Scotland so that a woman with her babe might walk scatheless from sea to sea, is forgotten, buried far deeper from us than the legendary Arthur who sat on the lion hill over the town; and of all the antique kings and queens only the saintly Queen Margaret, whose blind squat little chapel still sits in the heights of the Castle rock, and the frail Mary who was called Queen of Scots, are remembered of the people. But to the imaginative pilgrim there is ever a procession of dead kings passing down the long steep street from the Castle to the Abbey. They are the Eight Kings that the witches showed to Macbeth – the Royal line of Stuart, the two Roberts and the six Jameses, with whom Edinburgh's historical greatness came and departed. Everywhere the pilgrim's mind is turned to memories of the Stuarts. This stone in the Morningside Kirk wall held the great standard that James IV raised in the Boroughmuir when he reviewed his doomed army, and at the market cross of Edinburgh the phantom herald at midnight called the roll of those who were to die at Flodden. Up there in the Castle, James V turned his face to the wall when Mary Queen of Scots was born, and died with the words: 'It cam' with a lass, and it goes with a lass.' From that window in Holyrood, Mary – the

Poetic Muse has so intrigued with her Sister of History that there is no other 'Queen of Scots' in her annals – the 'most cruel, most beautiful of princesses' struggled with the mailed hands at her throat to cry out to her guard, and in the castle again, in that little turret-room whose window juts out high over the Grassmarket, the babe was born by whom Scotland was to gain England and lose her own crown.

After the Stuarts, kings and queens came no more to Scotland till George IV in a kilt (surely the greatest miracle ever wrought by the Wizard of the North) entered Holyrood. Later, Queen Victoria, in a dress of royal tartan with a large blue shawl, a white crêpe bonnet, and white ostrich feathers, and then King Edward, who was willing to do anything in reason for his Scottish subjects, but he would not stay at Holyrood. In 1911 came their present Majesties, who were at Holyrood for three sounding days. Their visit brought most keenly to Edinburgh a glimpse of her former state, and most keenly, too, revealed to the world how irrevocably it had passed away. Edinburgh can never again be more than a temporary seat of royalty.

In ordinary years royalty is represented in Edinburgh by the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. This means that Holyrood for a week is lit up at night and that a mimic Court is held in front of the fictitious portraits of fictitious kings, and that a landau with outriders trots up the brae and along Princes Street to the satisfaction of all beholders and the joy of the broken-kneed old horses in the cab-ranks at Waverley Market. (In 1924 the Lord High Commissioner was in private life an Ayrshire miner, and he and his good lady presided at Holyrood with more

dignity than some of their predecessors, and with the finest support from their aristocratic suite.) There is a procession up Canongate for which there is much to be said, and at night there is an array of rather decayed carriages appropriate to the decayed palace of the Stuarts.

But carle when the king came in 1911 it was all different. Old Holyrood was strained beyond its possibilities with the royal suite and assistants. When the palace was built the needs and circumstances of royalty were different from what they are nowadays. If all reports were true, the state of things in Holyrood on those three great nights was a not unfaithful reconstruction of Holyrood life in its old royal days. So, too, were the terms on which George V and Queen Mary lived here with the poorest folk of the Scottish capital hiving only a stone's throw from the Palace. The poor in their 'ticketed rooms' overlooked the parade ground and the doorway whence their sovereigns issued every day. They could be seen from the Palace windows. 'The rabble was at the Palace doors,' the most authentically mediæval touch of all, and the least likely to recommend itself to modern royalty.

This contrast between a modern Court at Holyrood and the simple labouring folk of the precinct haunted all the ceremonies, overshadowing them, it seemed, like the bare linear hills that frown down from the other side upon the little palace, almost touching its walls. These hills were the background that turned all the inconsistencies and oddnesses of the events of these sounding days to the phantasy of a dream. Very strange was the scene in the Canongate in the early hours of the morning when the Court was over. The street was deserted but for a

few red-haired barefooted boys and women swathed in shawls like shrouds, who gathered at the little close-set building in the Abbey Strand to stare at the high dark carriages and thundering motors in whose lit interiors sat fortunate ladies with jewels and plumes in their hair, relaxed and happy, returning with the Court seal on their aspirations. They passed up the dark winding Canongate, in whose crowded buildings the ancestors of some of them had lived and gone thence to Court in sedan-chairs. The darkness of the wide parade ground in front of the Palace was alive with lights, and strong rough voices shouted into the night. A gallery had been erected in front of the entrance and from the great doors a stream of brilliant figures frothed in waving plumes and shining shoulders and silver lace and bright weapons. A few of the Highland families had made great efforts to surround themselves with some of the pomp of an extinct system. There were footmen and ghillies about with silver badges and sprigs of myrtle and heather on their bonnets, and weapons at their side. An aged Highland chief with white locks and an elaborate costume with cairngorms on his brooches and dagger-case was the centre of this throng. He wore the silver jewel hunting-horn of an antique shape at his waist. What would have happened, one wondered, if he had raised it to his lips and blown a blast? Something surely would have happened, so perfect a piece of romance and phantasy did the old chief seem in his tartans and jewels in the brilliant light of the porch framed in the darkness of the old Palace. Would Arthur's Seat have rumbled and opened at the sound, and the King and his knights awakened from their trance and ridden out, a shining band? Would the roofless chapel of Holyrood

have given up its ghosts, and Queen Mary and her Maries and cavaliers have danced out from the Palace to meet them? But the silver horn hung silent at his waist, and the only horn that sounded was that of a big motor-car coming to rescue some of these gentlefolk and to bear them up through the slummy streets and away to the stately terraces of the New Town. Soon they had all gone and the women in the shawls and barefooted boys vanished into the *lands*. The King and Queen and their English suite remained in the haunted palace, and one by one the lights disappeared from the windows.

The royal visit was a probe into every part of Edinburgh's economy, and every turn proved more clearly the singular nature of this city. There were moments when it wore the aspect of the capital of Prince Otto's country. The nocturnal dispersal at Holyrood was one such moment. Another was in the endless procession of carriages – many of them open carriages – extending from the Scott Monument to Holyrood, filled with flowers and ladies, jewelled and arrayed, driving down in the clear northern twilight to the ancient palace lying under the hills. Edinburgh that night was indeed the capital of faerie. It was not the least like the scene in the Mall on a Drawing Room day. The life of the city went on but the procession was linked to it by the coming and going of pedestrian friends paying their court as the carriages waited on the hill. Another moment was the passage of the Sovereigns to St. Giles' and the Castle. The poor in these historic dwellings had hung their table-cloths and rugs out of the windows, as people still do in Italian cities on a festa, and had brought out their chairs and tables to the pavement and made their own

grand-stands, while barefooted boys danced everywhere they shouldn't, and the whole scene had a mediæval inclusiveness one had never witnessed elsewhere in royal progresses.

The intimate quality of Edinburgh life gave a distinct flavour to all the weeks of the historic visit. Where but in Edinburgh could there have been a Royal Garden Party although it rained till within half an hour of the appointed time? The invited ones sat in their homes and hotels and waited through the rainy hours hoping for the best. When the King and Queen decided that the party would be held, no bellman was sent round, but the guests somehow knew and came, and a critical but not unsympathetic populace gathered on the slopes outside, so close that they seemed almost on the top of the garden wall.

And to conclude this glimpse of Edinburgh's brief re-awakening as a capital, I must add the most characteristic mood of all. That venerable and aristocratic corps, the Royal Body-guard of Scottish Archers, with its five dukes and twenty noblemen in their dark green uniform, flat Scots bonnet and eagle plume, were drawn up for review in Holyrood grounds, and a few hundred people were gathered on a knoll of the hill overlooking the gardens. At a part of the ceremony the archers, following their ancient custom, sang together the psalm 'I to the hills will lift mine eyes' to the wailing tune of 'French,' and the crowd sitting on the hill, rising like guillemots at the sound, joined in the singing, so that the psalm sounded faintly into the Canongate and stole round the hill to awaken the covenant-ing echoes of Haddo's Hole.

CHAPTER X

THE MODERN ATHENIAN

AN ANGEL OF GOD, THEY SAY, LED ST. KENTIGERN TO A spot on the banks of the crystal Molendinar, and there he built a cell. Pilgrims visited him, and traders came to barter with the pilgrims; then happened a remarkable series of miracles (commemorated to this day in the city arms), and so Glasgow began and flourished – a place of peace. In war it, of course, took some part. The sword of Wallace Wicht flashed in its streets, and Mary Queen of Scots, putting her kingdom to the touch, lost it all at Langside, which is now a southern suburb; but from the twelfth to the fifteenth century it was ruled by bishops, and in the main its associations are of peaceful trading.

Edinburgh from the beginning meant war. An almost inaccessible hill near the sea, it was a refuge for any tribe strong enough to oust those who held it, and so the hill ran red again and again through the ages, and, although symbols and weapons have changed, there have always been little armed men and banners on the top of the great beetling rock from before the time of Edwin until to-day. People gathered for protection within its gates; the permanent residence of a king made it the better worth attacking and defending. Houses arose in the shadow of the Castle, and the city grew with war ever in its nostrils; looking southward for warning of an English advance over the Border, and northward for signs that the Forth had failed to bridle the wild Highlandmen. And so Edinburgh flourished, the centre of the nation's armed forces, the scene of terrible and heroic deeds, the whirlpool of internecine feud.

As war died out in Scotland, her prestige seems to have declined, and that of Glasgow to have risen with the prevalence of peace.

Reading the history of the two cities, one would expect to find that the people of each, if they still carried with them some impress of their past, would differ radically in type. The Old Edinburgh man would be watchful, reserved, and proud towards strangers, as men still are in countries where they carry arms; slow to decide on a course of action, but quick to pursue it. A city of traders would be friendly and tolerant to strangers to create the right atmosphere for business; they would be prompt in decision, with short memories for old wrongs and long pedigrees. And with this I must dismiss the people of 'the uncrowned capital of Scotland in mufti.'

But in considering whether the citizens of Edinburgh retain to-day some of the traits of their ancestors, we must bear one thing in mind. No single factor did more to save the prestige of the capital after the Union than her retention of the seat of the judicature; and as the law courts are the modern lists for the whole kingdom, a certain zeal for combat, that is characteristic of the city, survives among its inhabitants to-day. Farmer fighting against farmer, laird against laird, village against village, trader against trader, the battle has to be waged in the law courts by champions who are no longer knights-at-arms, but mercenaries, and who, if they are very famous champions, must be paid even before they flourish the least of their weapons. As in the days of 'Cleanse the Causeway' and Border feuds settled by the sword, a very large part of Scotland's bad blood and violent passions is still centred in and about the High Street of Edinburgh. It is well that once a year ministers of the Gospel from

all over the kingdom should flock to Edinburgh to hold their assemblies, exorcising – as they colour the city a holy black – if only for the space of ten days, the contentious spirit of the place.

As the colossal figure of Portsmouth is the seaman, so the lawyer bestrides Edinburgh, bringing his legal atmosphere and habit of mind into all departments of the city's life. It is not only that Senators of the College of Justice and Advocates and Writers to the Signet compose the large majority of the wealthier middle-class, and infect a wider circle of students, relatives, and friends, but there is also their army of clerks and dependents. Alexander Smith talks of Edinburgh possessing a Valhalla of legal gods. 'At Edinburgh,' he says, 'a Lord of Session is a Prince of the Blood, an advocate an heir to a peerage,' and the taint of the 'professional sectarianism' is over its society. Moreover, the professional men of law in Edinburgh are reinforced by a huge following of amateurs. As the seat of the Supreme Court, Edinburgh holds more jury trials, civil and criminal, than any other Scottish city; more at one time, indeed, than the rest of Scotland. The abnormal stream of citizens thus diverted to the jury-box, from time to time must have served, when it was released to ordinary channels of activity, to spread familiarity not merely with the leading lights of the Bar, but with the methods of legal argument and proof. Mr. Bartoline Saddletree still wags his head at many a close-mouth and tavern. It may even have helped, if help were needed, to teach the Edinburgh citizen that there are two sides to every question.

The Courts themselves are an unfailing attraction. The contingent of enthusiastic idle amateurs that seldom desert even the dullest hearing, attends in force at the great forensic

combats. Certainly the attitude of the Edinburgh man in the street is friendly to the lawyer, who figures so conspicuously in his city's life. I had a rather grotesque instance of this when I was looking for the early home of Robert Louis Stevenson in Heriot Row. I had asked a decent-looking workman for a direction, but he had never heard of Stevenson. But he must know, I urged – Stevenson, the great writer; every one must have heard of him. 'Oh, a writer!' and his face cleared at once; 'well, this is the place for them. I'll just tak' ye doon to the Post Office and they'll tell ye there. If he's a writer he'll no' be hard to fin'.' He was interested in my search at once. For English readers it should be explained that what they would call a solicitor is in Scotland a writer. If one could roll together the parts that the law plays in the economy of Edinburgh and make a figure of them, it would be a more appalling spectacle than poor Peter Peebles with the papers of his ganging plea tied with a tarry rope.

Once upon a time Scotland did behold in material form the legal sufficiency of Edinburgh. This was in the first half of the nineteenth century, when Craig's plan of the New Town was clothed with stone and lime. Here was a great and conscious effort of the spirit of the community to shatter its old scheme of things entire and build something nearer to its heart's desire. In the four great streets with attendant alleys and the six stately streets that intersect them, hardly a foot of space was left for workshop or factory! In all those fine stone palaces, Edinburgh was quietly to settle down and live on the quarrels and minutes of agreement of Scotland. It would be curious to know what the reflective man of the time from Glasgow or

Dundee or Paisley thought to himself as he looked around him. Possibly from musings upon these happy parallelograms, the well-knowing saying arose that not a big house is put up in Scotland but a wee house is put up in Edinburgh, signifying thereby that managing the estates and arranging the mortgages and fighting the boundary disputes of Scotland, would always provide an Edinburgh lawyer with a happy home. Not very long ago the Writers to the Signet managed all the great estates, and, without giving any guarantee for rents, earned a five per cent. commission by simply collecting them; but in these days of falling revenues the lairds look more closely to their siller, and for the most part employ a local man to do this work at half that charge. But when Heriot Row was built, these five per cents. blushed and bloomed like a briar-rose at ilka door.

How thoroughly the law has taken possession of the place is perhaps best seen when you consider the manners and customs of the Edinburgh man who would appear to be furthest from its influence. Among commercial people this city has the reputation of being most difficult to do business in, because of its love of holding repeated committee and board meetings before anything can be settled, and, at the last issue, of saying that it will just put on its hat and go round and see its *man of business*. To the commercial man from elsewhere this is the most humiliating touch of all. To find a merchant who has won reputation and fortune as a builder or draper or grocer, not only consulting a lawyer on a point of equipment or organization, but actually calling him *a man of business*, has purpled the face of business men from elsewhere. An agent for electric lifts, I have heard, was addressed by an Edinburgh merchant at the

end of protracted negotiations in these words: 'It's all right, of course, between you and me. You say you'll put right any breakdown through bad workmanship or bad material, but what I want to know is – what about my *heirs*?' Never before in the whole course of his business had the agent for electric lifts ever heard that blessed word. But at this point one ought to remember, on the other hand, that the professional atmosphere of Edinburgh has advantages. 'There are only two places in Britain,' an eminent architect from the west once remarked, 'where they know how to treat an architect – London and Edinburgh. In Glasgow they treat you like a damned clerk of works.'

For centuries the law has attracted a large share of Scotland's best intellect to Edinburgh, and very naturally its chief by-product was letters, first in the department of criticism and later in fiction, these by-products making Auld Reekie a city of cities in the world. The critical attitude one might single out as the most deep-rooted characteristic of the inhabitants. In the early nineteenth century you have the *Edinburgh Review* as dictator to English letters, and soon it found a worthy foeman in its neighbour *Blackwood's Magazine*, the journal of Lockhart and Wilson. These were in the days of Edinburgh's past, of which Alexander Smith thought he had heard too much, but in his own day he uttered the opinion of the city when he said that 'the poet trembles before Edinburgh; the success of an actor is insecure until thereunto Edinburgh has set her seal. Coarse London may roar with applause; fastidious Edinburgh sniffs disdain and sneers reputations away.' You find reference to her pretensions in the memoirs of most of the Victorian

celebrities. The hissing down of Thackeray in the Music Hall is sometimes mentioned as an instance of her arrogance, but it was only an expression of national dislike towards an Englishman who had been nasty about Mary Queen of Scots. Certainly, you still hear from actors, and especially from actresses, of their misgivings when they appear before an Edinburgh audience, and many lecturers say the same. There is a general agreement that it is the most difficult city to move 'in the whole touring system,' permitting its judgment to control its emotions to a degree which, however creditable it may be to the intelligence of the audience, is often heart-breaking to the performers.

It was a Glasgow man who recommended a tenth dram to a reluctant friend with the advice, 'Don't let your jud-judgment get the better o' ye.' If Edinburgh people have a fault – and who, after all, has not? – it is that they are apt to let their judgment get the better of them, to believe too exclusively that second thoughts are best. It is said that many budding projects which in more kindly surroundings might have blossomed with honour to the city, were blighted by chill blasts of premature criticism. Edinburgh, they say, thinks too little of the Thing itself, too much of How it is Done. One remembers in this connection that Scotland's first Repertory Theatre was not started in Edinburgh but in the commercial capital. Of well-known examples of this flaw in her character, there was the long unequal fight between criticism and inspiration over the site of the Usher Hall, and the site of the Gladstone Monument, designed by Mr. Pittendrigh Macgillivray. The one colossal instance of Edinburgh getting the better of its judgment is the fragment of the Parthenon on Calton Hill.

But when one comes to the root of the matter, there is no want of evidence that the perfervid Scot, once his judgment is satisfied, exists just as plainly in Edinburgh as elsewhere. Dickens wrote that never had he witnessed such a scene of enthusiasm as when he read passages from *David Copperfield* there. 'Fifty frantic men got up in all parts of the hall and addressed me all at once. Other frantic men made speeches to the walls. I got the people to lie down on the platform, and it was like some impossible tableau in a gigantic picnic – one pretty girl in full dress lying on her side all night holding on to a leg of my table! My people were torn to ribbons. They had not a hat among them, and scarcely a coat.' Gladstone's Midlothian campaign is, of course, an historical example of Scots enthusiasm. An English friend who recently contested an Edinburgh election told me that his first meeting was very cold, and half-way through his second he was thinking about the best train to take him to London. His audience seemed to like him less than ever, and he felt things were hopeless, but before he finished a sudden change came about. The meeting warmly responded to all his points, and during the rest of his candidature the enthusiasm exceeded anything he had seen in Wales. The people had first to make up their minds about him, and when that was done they gave full play to the perfervid emotion of the North.

The Edinburgh people are indeed the most responsible of all God's creatures. In every department of the city's life you find the same system of deferred judgment, and striving for exactitude in statement; it was an Edinburgh grocer who advertised in his window, EGGS AS FRESH AS POSSIBLE, 1*s*. In a train or a

tram-car you rarely hear an opinion expressed. A visitor interested in dialectics told me that the assistants in Edinburgh shops had a choice of words that he never heard in shops elsewhere. 'I'll (or we'll) endeavour to' was, he thought, their most characteristic formula. Another noticeable point that I would trace more clearly to the ægis of the law is the local custom of supporting a statement with a reason. Witness a girl behind a Princes Street counter who said: 'It was freezing to-day – at least, it was freezing in Morningside, for I reside there, and saw frost on the window.' Or the man on the top of a Portobello car, who cried to a lad whose hat had been blown off but who was slow to go after it: 'Aff ye get, man, aff an' efter it. Ye'll only lose a penny for your ride an' a hat costs sixpence.'

Then, you can find the salient features of the city reproduced in that invaluable volume – the *Edinburgh Directory*. Directories are always a delightful study for those interested in the characteristics of communities, but rarely do you find your search so well repaid as in this compilation. The differentiating genius of the place (it flowers in every line of Stevenson) touches the whole work with her delicate hand. Where, for instance, but in Edinburgh could you find the profession of Artist classified under all its various sections? '*Artists* – See also Painters (animal, historical, landscape, miniature, portrait) and Photographers'; and, sure enough, there they are, each in his proper place. In recent years, however, these classifications have been reduced. Another change is that this agreeable entry has disappeared: 'Bag Pipe Makers – see Musical Instrument Makers.' That was at once accurate and a neat defiance of the Sassenach. Here is a list of a few trades that give colour to the

Edinburgh Directory, and indicate certain interesting characteristics in Edinburgh:

Snuff dealers	69
Bagpipe makers	4
Haggis makers	12
Scots haggis manufacturers	1
Sworn talliers	1
Chiropractors	5
Wedding bouquet specialists	1
Firework artists	1

I miss the trade of 'Smoke Curer,' although one used to see their signs in many parts of the town. The strong winds and the high *lands* affect Edinburgh chimneys to a heart-breaking extent, and these doctors and surgeons of ailing chimneys still have a big practice in Edinburgh. Many other significant things might be plucked from this tree of knowledge, but I will content myself with remarking on the large number of Border and Fife names and (when all things are considered) the smallness of the Highland settlement, although Edinburgh, moreover, supports three sporran-makers.

The Directory helpfully reminds me that the Law is not the only great activity in Edinburgh. Litigation and education have been classed together as the two chief local industries. The Royal High School is famous as the school of Sir Walter Scott, of King Edward VII, and of many another famous man. It is now under the management of the School Board, and its existence, if less conspicuous, is still none the less useful. The Edinburgh Academy provides the shortest way to the Scottish

THE UNIVERSITY DOME

Bar. George Watson's College is understood to lead to distinction in every part of the world, but more especially in South America, where, it is said, you will always find the man on the top to be either a Buenos Ayrean or a Watsonian. Heriot's Hospital, once a boarding-school, now a day-school of a very practical sort, was founded by 'Jingling Geordie,' James VI's jeweller and gossip. Fettes, Loretto, and Merchiston are modelled on the English public-school system. A great part of Edinburgh's prestige in education comes from the efforts of the Merchant Company, which for forty years has devoted the largest part of its immense revenue to the endowment and maintenance of five day-schools for boys and girls. Edinburgh University is a worthy crown to the educational system of the city, and although the foundation of provincial universities in England, the Rhodes Scholarships, the increasing trend of Edinburgh youths towards English universities, and an over-deliberation in adapting itself to the circumstances of a new age, give its friends some apprehension, it still holds its supremacy in medicine and is one of the great universities of the world. Woman was welcomed here when England had all its university doors barred and bolted against her.

Banking, insurance, accounting, and printing have their stately headquarters here, and even to contemplate the vast salaries paid to the managers is said to make the observers giddy. Distilling, brewing, motor-car and meter manufacture are other industries that bring riches to Edinburgh. Although the number of very rich men is much smaller than in Glasgow or Manchester and some other cities, it is probably the wealthiest in the kingdom in proportion to inhabitants. I have been told

on semi-official authority that the income-tax returns for the west central part of Edinburgh are only exceeded in the London district that includes Mayfair. The rental returns show Edinburgh to be on the whole the most luxuriously housed large town in Britain. This is mainly due to the fact that Edinburgh men of all degrees live in their city. An unusual number own their houses, and it is said that more 'Form IV's' for the Land Tax were sent to Edinburgh than to any other city except London. 'Pride and Poverty' was the traditional sneer at Edinburgh, but it dates from the days when it applied to all Scotland. I have been told that before the War the deposits of the Edinburgh Savings Bank – apart from all deposits in other banks – would show an average of forty pounds for every inhabitant. Moreover, it contains per acre and per mile more baronets, K.C.B.'s, knights, and people in *Who's Who* than any other city outside Westminster. It is itself, indeed, the Westminster of Scotland.

For a visitor – or a re-visitor – to deal summarily with Church questions and church-going in Edinburgh would, of course, be an impertinence. All one might say is that it contains about 200 churches, or one church to every 2,000 inhabitants. Some strangers profess to find that the most impressive thing in Edinburgh is the three noble columns of church advertisements in the *Scotsman* of a Saturday. Established Church, United Free, Roman Catholic, English, Unitarian, Trinitarian – they all advertise, and flippant Englishmen, comparing these three columns with the meagre space in which theatres and concerts are announced, think that they have found Edinburgh's real idea of entertainment.

Another point where the English visitor suddenly finds that he is in a foreign country, and has reached a storm-point in the city, is when he hears the word 'prelacy' hissed forth with the utmost passion by persons of a quiet, self-contained exterior. At the Established Church Assembly Hall he may on occasion see such an incident as a little group of respectable, elderly men and women breaking into cries of furious reproach and objurgation as certain ministers are unobtrusively attempting to leave the precincts of the hall. 'Judas! you would sell your church for a crucifix. Serve the Church o' England or the Church o' Rome if you like, but don't take the Kirk o' Scotland's money!' They would continue the cry, a little self-consciously, until the minister was out of earshot; then they consult together – and go away for a cup of tea. Not very long ago two strangers, pausing to admire the steeple of St. Andrew's Church in George Street, were accosted by a man, who crossed the street to meet them. With the preface that he presumed he was speaking to Englishmen, he said, 'Living as you do under a benighted system of prelacy and patronage, you should be interested to hear that four hundred noble ministers walked out of that church into the street to protest against the system of patronage. That was called the Disruption. Good day, sirs.' With a civil inclination of the head he went his way, leaving his listeners with something worth thinking about. Certainly no Scot (as one of them was) can remember without pride how those single-minded men abandoned manses and stipends and went out to start the world afresh for a point of principle. Eager crowds waited in the streets while the momentous meeting was being held, and when the head of the

procession emerged there were cries of 'They're oot!' and messengers ran off all over the city. This was the beginning of the Free Church now joined to the United Presbyterians under the title of the United Free Church of Scotland. The event happened in 1843. In 1926 their reunion with the Church of Scotland is in sight. And so the wheel comes full circle.

The little explosions against prelacy that he may hear in the course of his wanderings, will not appear strange to the Southron who has visited Greyfriars Churchyard and seen its monuments and heard the stories of the persecutions which took place there and in the Grassmarket, when Charles II was king. On a flat stone in the graveyard thousands signed the National Covenant, some with blood for lack of ink. In many of the graveyards throughout Scotland you may yet find such epitaphs as that on a tombstone in Hamilton, quoted by Stevenson:

> 'Stay, passenger, take notice what thou reads:
> In Edinburgh lie our bodies; here our heads;
> Our right hands stand at Lanark; these we want
> Because with them we signed the Covenant.'

There have been many religious persecutions in Scotland, and the Covenanters did not stay their hand when their turn came, but the slaying and tortures during the Episcopacy in Scotland have left the deepest stamp on the popular memory, even to this day. A few years ago an old ballad shop in the Canongate had many such pamphlets, as 'AN ELEGY in MEMORY of that VALIANT CHAMPION, GRIERSON, late LAIRD OF LAG, who died DECEMBER 23, 1733, wherein the PRINCE OF DARKNESS commends many of his FRIENDS who were the chief MANAGERS of the late

PERSECUTION.' Pamphlets of this kind can still be found in several obscure parts of the town. But even in Edinburgh the Covenanters and their wrongs are a half-forgotten memory, fading out of fireside story into the cold perspective of history. Yet no sketch of the Edinburgh man can approach completeness without the dark background of the early days of the Kirk.

Still the gibe about Edinburgh's pride and poverty does persist, and if you look closely into the matter you find that it has a basis and by no means a regrettable one. Appearance clearly means a good deal in Edinburgh. It has been said that there appearance, not time, is money. The characteristic does not seem to have an historical basis, for we see that James VI, when he was bringing his Danish bride to his capital, wrote in some trepidation to the Provost: 'For God's sake see all things are richt at our hame-coming. A King with a new-married wife does not come hame ilka day.' On the same momentous occasion he borrowed a pair of silk stockings from the Earl of Mar with the plea that 'ye wadna wish that your King suld appear a scrub on sic an occasion.' Edinburgh seems to have disdained appearances so far as to have become a byword for unsavouriness throughout the United Kingdom until the time of the Great Flitting. When the grimy, smelly Old Town was exchanged for the breezy glories of the New, another era began, and it is natural to suppose that the people sought for an outward expression of their prestige in their clothes and manners as well as in their buildings. Certainly no other community considered itself so carefully as to have issued such a public placard as Carlyle noticed on the famous occasion of George IV's visit; that 'it was expected that everybody would

be carefully well dressed, black-coat and white duck trousers if at all convenient.' Carlyle – stern soul! – decided that if he changed his dress at all, he would wear a white coat and black trousers.

The national monument on Calton Hill was begun with grand ceremony, but the money was all exhausted after the twelve columns and entablature were completed, the demands for Edinburgh's other vast building schemes drying up the sources of further contribution. At this point the 'pride and poverty' taunt, formerly applied to Scotland as a whole, was fastened upon Edinburgh, which to its eternal credit refused to take advice and pull down the fragment, and so to-day it stands out before the eyes of the world as the memorial of an age whose very mistakes were heroic. Even those who know nothing of the mighty spirit that was stirring in the city at that time are moved by the great ruin on Calton Hill and the lofty Dean Bridge, to wonder what manner of men these Edinburgh people were. Desiring an impressive ruin (it would seem), they did not wait for Time's help, but promptly built one for themselves; desiring an impressive bridge, they did not wait for a great river, but built over the inconsiderable stream they had at hand. Small wonder that they are proud, and that clerks swing canes in business hours, and that men in the post office wear camellias in their button-holes, and that a gun goes off at one o'clock, so that they can all pull out their watches and do credit to one another. People must dress carefully when they are to walk in the full sunshine of Princes Street, and cultivate dignity in front of a romantic castle and Grecian-Doric buildings.

Nevertheless, it is a little difficult for strangers from less-

favoured places to fall at once into line with a city where circumspection sometimes carries with it censoriousness, and where a person whose standards are different has either to make the effort and cultivate those of Edinburgh, or to remain always an alien. I know of one man who was brought to the conclusion that the way was too steep for him, although he was the hardy climber who lit the lamps on Calton Hill. It was some years ago. His gloaming march up the steep empty stairs in the rock, lighting with his long, brass-ended torch the iron lamps up against the sky, then higher still over the brow of the rock to the one near the Old Observatory, used to fascinate me, night after night. He seemed to be lighter not of lamps but of stars. However, he was a decent North of England man, a little soured by his failure to get on terms with the people whose hills he lit. He had been a worker in the mills, but his health suffering, he had come north and sought an out-of-door life. He had gone first to Glasgow, of which city he had nothing but good to say. 'Quiet, friendly, 'omely people. They would 'elp you if you was in trooble, though you was only a straenger. They wouldn't call naemes after you – not in Glasgow, they wouldn't. Though you was altogether a straenger, they would take up with you. It was joost like Wigan, where I coom from. Ae, we used to go friendly together, aal the lamplighters, to the funeral of a lamplighter when he died, though we 'ad 'ad no knowledge of 'im. It's not a very 'ealthy plaes is Glasgow, I think, and there was a lot of lamplighters, and I used to spend most of my Saturdays going to funerals there. It was very friendly like: an 'omely, friendly plaes was Glasgow. But Edinburgh – although they're good to you here in your business –

it's not a nice 'omely plaes to live in. They're bad and quarrelsome – always something. Me and my wife are quiet-living and always paed our way. But it's names called after you on the stairs and shouting after you and putting it on you as you'd done something you 'adn't done, and ill-feeling general, and everybody seems to be straengers here. It's the one being better than the other, and having a grander 'ouse than the other and general puttin' on. My wife says it's aal red 'errings and pianofortes in Edinburgh.'

Now the lamplighter's story has some significance, not only because of his ideas about Edinburgh, but, as I subsequently found, because of Edinburgh's ideas about his story. It became a sort of test question in different Edinburgh circles. Some sympathized with his complaint, seeing in it a proper protest against the modern upsetting ways of people aping their betters and trying to appear different from what they were. On the other hand, a large class saw in the 'red herrings and pianofortes' the pursuit of an ideal at considerable self-sacrifice. It was, in brief, the spirit that had made Scotland what she was. 'Red herrings and pianofortes' was only a restatement of the motto, 'Cultivate learning on a little oatmeal.'

William Sharp quotes as an old saying that the Edinburgh folk are all born with a bit of North Sea ice in their veins and a touch of grey east wind in their minds. The visitor can say little about that; only a young native or an old resident can generalize soundly about three or four hundred thousand persons. One hears that the divisions and cross-divisions in Edinburgh society are more difficult to follow than elsewhere, which seems natural in a city where the professional element predominates and where

people see one another every other day. Outside of London, Edinburgh alone of British cities possesses a Smart Set that is identified as such even by so severe an estimator of social altitude as 'A Foreign Resident.' But all that a humdrum visitor dares say is that a reputation for exclusiveness has long been attached to Edinburgh, and that an outward expression of it at once meets the eye in the streets. Much of the outer ring of the city is composed of neat middle-class houses of two stories with a short garden in front, and outside the garden gate is a bell. The visitor may not approach nearer than the gate. He rings the bell. The household can then scrutinize him, and, if it likes his looks, can set some mechanism in motion by which the gate quietly opens, and he may then enter the citadel. The house with the bell at its garden gate may be likened unto Edinburgh.

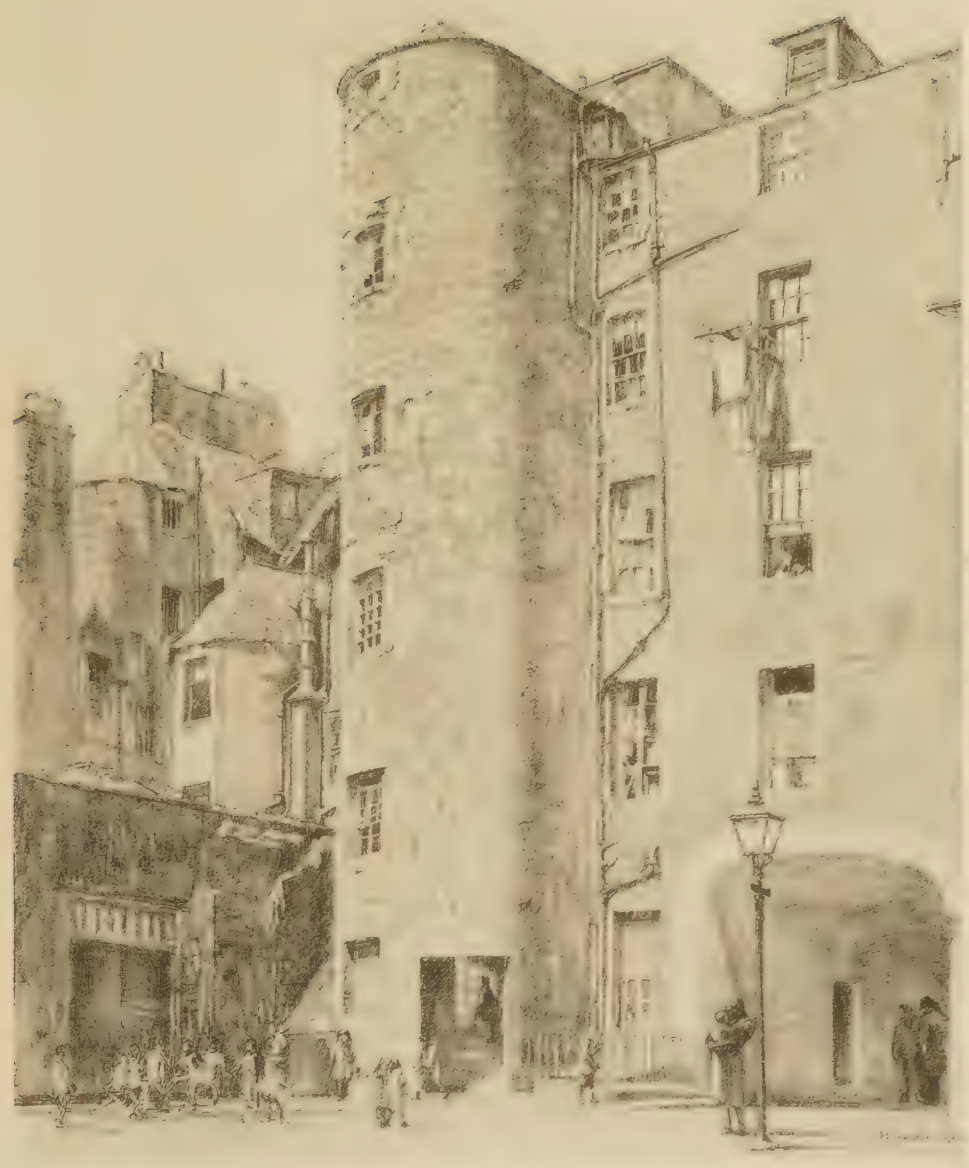
The main business of the Modern Spirit seems to be to destroy the characteristic and the picturesque in people as in their costumes and to make every one grotesquely alike. Even in Edinburgh, which seems designed by Providence to produce a race with marked distinctions in harmony with the place, personal characteristics are becoming less and less apparent, and some day the observer will not be able to find any. Let me hasten to note a few that may still be discovered.

The stranger at once notices that much attention is paid to gait and carriage here, and that salutations have a certain practised grace not common nowadays. That seems a natural result of the spacious uncrowded streets where people have time to prepare themselves for a meeting and to decide the exact degree of their gesture and expression. But it is much more puzzling for the stranger to understand why so many elderly Edinburgh men

should look like Michael Angelo. 'Michael of the Terrible Brows' acquired them, it is said, by much brooding over death and judgment, and some have thought that the set frowning look on the faces of so many Edinburgh men who have passed middle-age is due to the influence of the Edinburgh Sundays and much meditation among the tombs. It is, however, nothing of the kind, but simply the seal of years of effort to keep on a tall hat in a strong wind in these high-set streets. Probably generations subjected to the same unequal struggle predispose the Edinburgh man easily to acquire this impressive physical characteristic, but that is a question for the eugenist. I have heard it said that you can tell an elderly Edinburgh gentleman in the dark by feeling the frontal development of his head – a test seldom applied, however, without a formal introduction. A delightful and very common experience of the visitor is to see the immediate relaxation of these severe visages in hearty social life.

In the wind-searched streets of the city one might also find some explanation for the neatness and skilfulness of dress noticeable everywhere among Edinburgh women. Here, I suppose, as in London and elsewhere, there must be some women with a love for trashy finery, but somehow one never sees them. If the high winds do not teach them the value of reefed canvas, the pressure of public opinion must do so. 'Entablature' has been used as a handy phrase for hat, headgear, and neckwear, and if one might use 'plinth' for skirts and footgear, one would say that the neatness of plinth of the Edinburgh women has struck many observers as a feature of these streets.

From characteristics that may be traced to the physical condi-



ST. JOHN STREET, OFF THE CANONGATE

tions of the city one may turn to those which may have their origin in its history and find many tempting points for digression. One would like to consider, for instance, how far the peculiar system of life in high *lands* of the Old Town affected the gentry who dwelt there in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is a subject for a book rather than a side-note, and quite worthy of the copious research and learning of which modern Edinburgh has so large a store to bring to bear upon it, but even the amateur in Old Edinburgh writings speedily becomes aware that social conditions of an extraordinary kind existed for generations and had definite effects on the people. Inventories after fires and other evidence show that at the time of the Union there existed *lands* of eleven and twelve stories, of which the lower two were tenanted by a deposit of sedan-chairmen and kailwives, and the others contained strata, which increased in richness, as it were, from lawyers' clerks, merchants, town councillors, and Writers to the Signet, to country lairds, persons of title, and dowager ladies; above these lawyers again, and dancing-masters and craftsmen with an outcrop of poor in the attics. The houses in these *lands* were so small that even earls had sometimes to do with one or two servants at the most, and in the best families the linen was washed at home, the finer things being hung in the passages and living-rooms and the coarser things hung on the *pulley-hees*, just as the poor folk hang their rags there to-day. Important personages had to fumble up and down those dark stairs and touch shoulders with their rougher neighbours from above and below. Each stair was like the main street of a village where the news and gossip passed up and down directly and through servants. A birth, a death,

conjugal correction, social misbehaviour, bad luck and good luck would be common knowledge. The people, gentle and simple, must have lived for at least a couple of centuries in what would seem to us now an appalling state of intimacy. Think of the knowledge of life this must have meant to the girls of family brought up in Old Edinburgh. Theirs must have been a world apart from the upper-class English life of the period with its seclusion and silence of town mansion.

One cannot help thinking that the plainly-marked difference in the expression and mien of women in Raeburn's portraits, when compared with those in the portraits of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney, was not entirely due to the difference of temperament between the Scots and the English. It is probable that people who knew so much about life as those bred in or influenced by the Old Edinburgh tradition could never have given themselves up to the gestures and expressions of allurement and languishing of the English masters. In the faces of nearly all Raeburn's women there is something direct and – but disillusioned is not the word, for the faces have zest and brightness. Even the youngest have the look of women who believe only part of what they hear, and who know much more about themselves and other people than they would care to tell. But if these straight-glancing ladies hint that life had lost something of its bloom, they also suggest a rich humour and humanity, as if they liked the taste of actuality and their minds had thrived upon it.

Scott, Cockburn, and other writers, in whose youth the Old Tradition of dwelling in the *land* was coming to an end, have left famous pictures of a wonderful type of Old Edinburgh

gentlewoman which was plentiful then. Bluntly outspoken, even a little Rabelaisian in their speech flavoured with racy natural images, they were good-humoured and strong-headed, able to exchange badinage with a kailwife or to hold their own with dignity in any company however learned or grand. This surely is the combination of qualities one might expect to find as the gift of life in the closes. The cramped flats and the custom of the town meant few servants, and the upper classes had to assert themselves by what natural dignity they had. Wilson, speaking of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe as showing to the nineteenth century the type of a gentleman of the Old Edinburgh tradition, singles out his peculiar variations of intimacy and haughtiness. Half a century has gone since the last of the generation of gentlefolk born in Old Edinburgh passed away, but it is difficult to believe that anything so strongly marked and germane to the capital of Scotland should have gone without leaving a trace on the life of the city.

And as I have endeavoured to show in the earlier chapters, the *lands* of the Old Town still have a peculiar impress and flavour to give to the lives of the poor who now crowd in even the best of them. These strange stone dwellings have reclaimed their potent influence, and, as once they taught their aristocratic tenants what rude life and poverty were, so now they hint to the poor folk there something of the refinement and decoration of their stately past. To know that people of rank and learning had lived in these same rooms where their own hard lot is fulfilled is a pride to many of them, and the unending stream of visitors from all over the world who come to peer about their closes keeps the past ever before their minds. 'Aye, this is an

awfu' famous place,' said a woman, turning with pride from her slop-pail in Riddle's Court. 'Ma son is a sailor, and he tell't me that he saw a picture card o' the house in New York in Ameriky! He said he kent it by his mither's auld duds on the *pulley-hees* at the window. It's an awfu' famous place this over a' the warld.'

Another channel for speculation is what mementoes of the old intellectual prestige of Edinburgh still remain, and as the sort of minor index that comes to the notice of a visitor, he cannot help seeing that people are often better known by their intellectual hobby than for their official position or prominence in business. Many instances of this might be quoted. In one the stranger made an inquiry in general company about a Government official of some distinction whom he had recently met. Nobody seemed to know him, until some one said, 'Oh, of course, that's –,' mentioning the department of Utopian coin on which he was the greatest living authority. A merchant, the ramifications of whose business are not contained by Scotland, was identified as the first living authority on the Great Roc's eggs; and a successful lawyer was known to every one as possessing the greatest collection of mediæval cannon-balls in Britain. Of course, even in Edinburgh, every one is not the greatest living authority on something, but there are enough of such personages to suggest that learning, pursued for its own sake, still gives a mental salt to its society. Moreover, you will hear more Latin tags in ordinary conversation than anywhere in Britain, save in Oxford, but it is law Latin. Still, it was a retired army major who in 1910 wrote a letter to the *Scotsman* about the paving of Princes Street which consisted of five lines, four of them in Latin. One has heard it often said that, although Edinburgh

may maintain something of its old level of culture, it does not nowadays draw the eyes of the world. The cautious observer, however, will not assume too much from that. The eyes of the world are apt to be a little slow and weary. It is only within these last few years, for instance, that the rarer genius of Scottish art is coming into its own. Orchardson and Pettie, by their long residence in the South and their romantic subject-matter, received their full meed of honour – the latter perhaps more than his share – but William M'Taggart, whose works are the most spiritual and original expression of Scotland through painting, David Scott, her one big imaginative artist, and Andrew Geddes, the rarely gifted portrait-painter, are yet hardly known to the outside world. Even Raeburn's fame south of the Tweed is hardly a generation old. In Redgrave's *Dictionary of Artists* he is mentioned only as one of the followers of Lawrence!

Alexander Smith in his day spoke of Edinburgh as the 'place of Yesterday,' yet as we look back through the perspective of time we see that many striking figures were even then at his elbow, and the next generation was to bring Stevenson, who made Edinburgh shine with a new warmth in the minds of men. Who can say how many of the heroes of the future are massed around as one walks in Princes Street? Who, indeed? Not mine, at any rate, to toll the old refrain:

> 'London and Death gar thee look droll
> And hang thy heid.'

One may say, however, that Edinburgh feels the attraction of London more potently than other cities, as it is in one way the most Anglicized of Scots communities, and that, owing to one

development of its educational system and perhaps to the proximity of the sea, it loses more than its share of its best youth. As I have said in the beginning of these notes, Edinburgh is a city from which you look down on lighthouses and out on bare green hills; and the sea and the hills must predispose a part of the great army of youth that gathers in the city to thoughts of travel and the world elsewhere. Wherever you turn in Edinburgh, you face distant prospects on sea and land. Standing on Calton Hill on a clear day, looking out to the ocean and back to the hills, you remember with peculiar appropriateness the words of Stevenson's requiem:

> 'Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
> And the hunter home from the hill.'

One can imagine the exile as he wrote it recalling images first conceived on this spot; and the spectacle is there to-day to stir the minds of new generations and send them forth on their travels.

CHAPTER XI

THE MERCIES OF EDINBURGH

GREAT CITIES ARE ALWAYS CHANGING BUT NOT MORE SO THAN the eyes that see them, and when we return after an absence of years it is sometimes difficult to believe that we once were thrilled by what is now before us. One is sure that one could never recapture the first excitement of the towering apparition of New York rising over the waters, or the unhuman phantasmagoria of her nightscape, alive with rushing sky-signs, vast buildings silhouetted against vaster buildings, and higher still in the sky, with no apparent connection with the earth, little lit-up palaces and chapels glowing like fairy icebergs. You return to Rome and Florence again and again with new expectation, for there are endless beauties to discover, and their lovely detail must be studied like the chasing of an ancient chalice. But a great modern city, however wonderful, must astound and thrill you once for all, and you need expect no more detail in it than in lightning. London, seen after an absence, seems dingier than ever and as sullenly mindful not to please, yet somehow her rare grandeurs and beauties reluctantly disclose themselves in mist and gleam, and you find the old spell is still in your heart. Edinburgh, I think, gives you something of what is memorable in both. Like New York, with which she has some relation, as her original problem was the same, confined as she was to a rock and forced to increase upwards till her buildings of fifteen stories were then the highest in the world, Edinburgh's precipitous shape is unforgettable; and she has her wide spacious streets and regularity of buildings, while she looks out on a great estuary. But her complexion is ever changeful and, like London,

her old part is a labyrinth of lanes and alleys and courts in which lurk some beautiful and many curious and ancient things, charged and haunted with the civilizations of a thousand years. She still stands as a show-place of the world, more than ever so, now that the world travels more.

The Great War found her a city of sailors rather than soldiers, with naval blue colouring her streets, and she looked down on a great war fleet in the Forth, and saw wounded and victorious ships coming home after famous sea battles; and the last act of all that world tragedy was played one misty morning off her coast, when a great surrendered fleet of the enemy passed the May and hauled down its flag for the last time. She saw many strange national sights, stranger than any that Thomas the Rhymer foretold, when there were more armed men wearing the kilt than had ever worn it in Scottish history. 'Fearful lights that never beacon save when kings and heroes die' were seen from Edinburgh walls as in the Flodden ballad; and strange visitants flew over her towers while German prisoners lay in her castle where a century earlier French prisoners had lain. New war monuments appeared in her gardens and streets to commemorate the young men who never returned, and the Castle itself ceased at last to be an armed citadel, and became a National Memorial, as though we had seen our last war. Edinburgh swelled in girth, and grew in population till her numbers exceeded the 400,000. This brought new perils to her good looks. Houses must be built for her needs, and instead of extending her comely terraces to the west, villas and cottages on the English plan spread over the green country of the western roads. Some had hoped for *lands* of houses looking over corn-

fields instead of roughcast cottages looking into roughcast cottages, but it was decreed that newest Edinburgh must look as common as any new English town. The kinema palaces and multiple shops laid ugly paws on Princes Street, an American cheap bazaar with the vulgarest of fascia was allowed to range itself beside Robert Adam's Register House! (What is Mons Meg for?)

The parapets of the Dean Bridge have grown higher still so that only giants can look over and enjoy that noble view. Incipient suicides are supposed to be deterred by the trouble they would have in surmounting these parapets, but other cities with just as tempting heights do not penalize the public and have no increase in mortality among their mentally deficient. Then, the drive round Arthur's Seat is forbidden to motorists after sundown, although the gates are open all night to pedestrians who are not less likely to have designs against the law; and so that splendid drive in moonlight nights when many would like to enjoy Edinburgh in all her magic, is denied to them. The reason given is that it would require a larger staff of gatekeepers; but why the road gates should not be open as well as the pavement gates no one can tell. This vexatious restriction will be swept away some day in the twinkling of a pen. It is only a question what government will get the credit for doing it. And some day a sensible Town Council will allow us to see the view from Dean Bridge and apologize to the citizens for so long keeping them out of the birthright of Edinburgh people to look out from high places. In a more serious age than this it was the custom in Scotland to say a grace at meals for the *mercies* that Providence had spread before them. I have always thought of

these great views of Edinburgh as the *mercies* that Providence had spread before us, these views and the many happy contiguences that make life in Edinburgh so agreeable, so well prepared for society in a town.

Despite changes Edinburgh seems as good to live in as ever. It is much the size that London was when West London was really 'town,' and when people meant something definite when they used the term 'society.' An old-fashioned victoria could still take you round nearly all the places where well-to-do people live. Most Edinburgh lawyers can and do walk home from the Courts to their houses, for it is not considered the thing (unless you be a Judge) to motor to and from the Courts. There are more dinner parties in Edinburgh houses than there are in any town, except London, in the kingdom. Hotel and restaurant parties are still unusual, while wine cellars are still maintained in many houses; and the warmth and zest of Edinburgh hospitality which struck the English Captain Topham over a century ago still gives savour to these homes. The striking scale of the Edinburgh houses and their hospitable traditions owes something to a peculiarity of the Edinburgh legal system. Having no Inns of Court the lawyers have their offices in their houses, and this allows them a bigger dwelling, which explains something of the stateliness of Moray Place and Heriot Row, and the mixture of the professional and social life must have made for informal hospitality, as with established artists in St. John's Wood, although it would be profane to hint in Edinburgh that it introduced Bohemia. The domestic aspect of legal life extends to the Courts themselves. In the homely lobby of the Courts you see on a shelf at the height of your elbow a number of black wooden

CHARLOTTE SQUARE

boxes, each lettered with the name of an advocate, and stuffed with legal papers, which by abundance or meagreness proclaim the practice of the owner. The advocate's clerk waits somewhere near his chief's box and writers come there to get in touch with counsel.

Counsel themselves when not in court or consulting near their box are walking up and down their ancient hall where once the Scottish Parliament sat. The ritual is to march in pairs facing towards one another at the turn like officers on board ship. Up and down – up and down the hall they go, the over-briefed and the briefless, the young men of family and the old men who have founded one; the men of the past and the men of the future, and the men who only tell golf stories; the tragedy and the comedy of the Scots Bar that is just beginning to be disturbed with the thought that the loaves and fishes of the future may sometimes be handed out by a Labour Government. Round the walls in tiers of pictures – some of them Raeburn's best – the judges and law commentators of the past look down on them. Old Forbes of Culloden, almost worn down to a spirit, stretches out his thin hand in the gesture of a man stilling the waters of strife, a noble piece of sculpture by Roubillac, and one of the finest statues in Scotland. Braxfield with his sardonic mouth looks out at them from Raeburn's canvas, and all the great lawgivers of Scotland for three hundred years regard the tide of Scots law life of to-day as it passes beneath them. In winter the lawyers stand by the two great coal-fires in the ancient fireplaces cracking their jokes and looking at the clock. It is all curiously intimate, crowded and individual. The judges do not wear the long periwig as in England, but the short bar wig; the senior advocates wear long

white falls at the neck and the juniors white bow ties. In a few of their gowns you notice a prominent tab beneath the right shoulder-blade, and this is worn with a certain air. The old name for it was 'The devil's wing.' It shows that the wearers had pleaded before the law lords in London.

The advocates, as I have said, walk to and from their houses and the Courts. One of the pleasing sights of Edinburgh can be seen on the Mound any morning before ten when the Courts are sitting. The tall hat persists even in these days, and coveys of a dozen tall-hatted white-tied men can often be sighted making their way up the Mound, and on a windy or frosty morning the elderly or stout of them can be observed working themselves cannily up the steep bend of the brae by the aid of an iron companion-rail on the port side. The old match-woman who used to sit there did not give a good account of them. When asked who the men were in the *lum* hats, she said that they were lawyer bodies going to the Courts. Did they ever give her anything? 'Them gie me anything? They would cherge me for sittin' here if they could.' She did not seem to like them, although, like every one else, she appreciated their *lum* hats. In the afternoon the tall hats go down the hill to their houses, which are also their chambers, and the writers' agents and doers call on them there. All briefs are delivered by messenger at their houses, for the post is still non-existent in Edinburgh for the delivery of briefs. The advocate who lives outside of the legal area must be an exceptionally good man if he is to get the writers to send their clerks outside their normal beat.

All this keeps alive in the New Town something of the old intimacy and unity of common interest that was so characteristic

of the Old Town, and the daily procession of the lawyers up to the Old Town and back to the New has the significance of a rite, for so long as the lawyers go up to Parliament House the decayed Old Town will still stand as the centre of Edinburgh – even if the municipality come down the hill.

How friendly to live in the whole place seems! Is there a more agreeable art gallery in the world than the Scottish National Gallery that Playfair placed so sweetly on the Mound? It is the right size for a morning or afternoon visit, and its octagonal rooms that each give six centres on the walls (the other sides make the fairway) lead you on without that sinking of the heart that comes to you from the long straight galleries of other capitals, be their masterpieces what they may. In the Edinburgh rooms you get the idea that the pictures are visiting you and gathering around you. I feel I have almost conversed with some of them – with the Tiepolo ladies and Allan Ramsay's sweet wife, and that great gossip of Raeburn's, Mrs. James Campbell in her white *mutch*, and even with Hogarth's sinful Sarah Malcolm (why is, alack! his Lord Lovat, whom, too, he painted in prison just before execution, in London?); but never, of course, with the lovely Mrs. Graham, any more than did (one suspects) Gainsborough himself who has set down for all time the look she gave him. The collection is always growing; every visit discloses new beautiful things; yet the walls do not look more crowded, only better. How has Mr. Caw managed it? It is like a great lord's gallery with all the second-rate works away and the best things from a few royal collections added. It is withdrawn behind the Royal Scottish Academy, which is allowed (one might say) first bite at the people in Princes

Street. Here, too, the rooms are not too large and here is a beadle with cocked hat and laced coat who puts the attendants of Burlington House to shame. Most of the R.S.A.'s and A.R.S.A.'s are known to the Edinburgh people, not through gossip paragraphs in the Press, but as fellow-citizens, and many of them are stout-hearted enough to dress like the public conception of artists, so that they are known as '*Mr. So-and-so the Artist.*'

A few minutes' walk takes you to the National Portrait Gallery in Queen Street, where you may muse over the plainness of the faces of historical personages, even of Mary Queen of Scots, and study in Hamilton's portrait the tightened dry-eyed, prematurely aged man who once was Bonnie Prince Charlie. Museums hive in Edinburgh, and all are within stroll of one another, so that you can follow your subject from the Castle to the Look Out Tower, and on to the municipal collection in the City Buildings and out to the National Scottish Museum in Chambers Street, down to John Knox's House and Holyrood, and back to the Antiquarians' Museum in Queen Street, and there are many others. And has London such seemly concert halls as the McEwen Hall and the Usher Hall for its music?

The mercies of Edinburgh – how many and how varied they must be in an ancient city large enough for the flowering of every social grace, and not too large for the isolation of its parts. The burghers could give *fêtes champêtres* in the innumerable gardens in the squares, and between the terraces and crescents; they could motor round the city for most of the way through pleasant country roads, and they could wash their faces in dew on May mornings on Arthur's Seat and could sit on the Braids or Salis-

bury Crags on moonlight nights composing poetry and regarding their wonderful town. Could there be a more delectable existence for middle-age than that of a bank-manager living on the top of one of those great bank palaces in an Edinburgh square or on the heights, able to summon the wittiest and most learned society of Edinburgh to his board, and to hold them by ripe discourses on life and currencies, and the traditions of his bank, while the white lamplights spring up in the town and people go to the windows to see these pearls on the warm breast of the long northern twilight? Every Edinburgh man in good weather can rest on a pleasant green place after a quarter of an hour's walk, and many of them in less time than that; and from their windows the people in the Old Town can look out on what the world comes thousands of miles to see. The picturesque is perhaps the least nourishing side of human existence, but if the normal trials of the Edinburgh people, rich and poor, are much the same as those who live in meaner cities, they have rewards of their own.

And the natives of this grey metropolis have often enough laid their praises at her feet. One of them wrote the lines that shall end this book, and the hearts of many strangers have felt with him:

'Reikie fareweel! I never part
Wi' thee but wi' a dowie heart.'